

Ribblesdale School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	119716
Local Authority	Lancashire
Inspection number	339513
Inspection dates	29–30 September 2009
Reporting inspector	Paul Chambers HMI

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1289
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Ruth Hargreaves
Headteacher	Mr Simon Smith
Date of previous school inspection	21 September 2006
School address	Queen's Road Clitheroe Lancashire BB7 1EJ
Telephone number	01200 422563
Fax number	01200 442506
Email address	sasmith@ribblesdale.org

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Royal Exchange Buildings
St Ann's Square
Manchester M2 7LA

T: 08456 404045

Textphone: 0161 618 8524

E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk

W: www.ofsted.gov.uk

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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and five additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 42 lessons and held meetings with a governor, staff, groups of pupils and parents. They observed the school's work and looked at a wide range of documentation including 388 parental questionnaires.

- pupils' progress across the school, particularly the progress of boys who enter the school with below average attainment
- how well the current curriculum meets the needs of all
- the rigour and accuracy of the school's self-evaluation
- how the school's specialist status contributes to learning and progress, the curriculum and the community.

Information about the school

Ribblesdale School is a larger than average secondary school that serves the town of Clitheroe and the surrounding districts in Lancashire's Ribble valley. It is a non-selective school in an area where some other schools operate selective admissions arrangements. The proportion of students from minority ethnic groups and the proportion whose first language is not English are both broadly average. Few students have special educational needs and/or disabilities, and the proportion with a statement of special educational needs is below average. The proportion of students entitled to a free school meal is well below the national average. The school runs and manages extended school provision after normal school hours on two days per week. The school is designated a high-performing specialist school; it has had specialist status in technology for over 10 years and in 2007 was awarded a second specialism in applied learning. The school holds the Investors in People and Healthy Schools awards.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

Ribblesdale is a good school, popular with parents, where the drive towards excellence involves all staff. Pupils achieve well because of the good teaching that they receive and the excellent levels of care, guidance and support that the school provides. The outstanding curriculum meets pupils' needs extremely well and has had a notable impact on improving pupils' motivation and attitudes to work. Pupils make an excellent contribution to the school and the local community: many take full advantage of the many curricular opportunities that enable them to work in the local community and large numbers of pupils from Year 7 to Year 10 participate in a Young Enterprise scheme.

Students enter the school with broadly average attainment and leave with attainment that is clearly above average. This represents good achievement. The quality of teaching is good. Teachers plan well to achieve progression in pupils' learning; they offer challenge and use good questioning skills. As a result, pupils demonstrate good progress through their ability to reflect on their learning and to give explanations of their reasoning as well as their methods. Weaker lessons focus too much on the teacher talking and give insufficient opportunities for pupils to engage actively in their learning. Assessment, including marking, is good, but the quality of in-class assessment varies. In the best lessons, teachers assess the progress of each pupil and respond quickly to any individual needs. In addition, teachers make pupils aware of the level at which they are working and indicate clearly how individual pieces of work can be improved. Less effective assessment is not systematic and involves monitoring the progress of the whole group, but giving insufficient attention to the progress of each individual.

Care, guidance and support are outstanding. The school's well-established support structures enable staff to provide well for a range of personal needs, including the needs of the most vulnerable pupils. The school's excellent relationships with outside agencies help to give well-coordinated support where it is needed. The extended school provision makes a strong contribution to the excellent support and guidance that pupils receive.

The school's specialist status has had a strong impact on many areas of the school. As well as improved results in a wide range of subjects within the school's specialism, improvements in teaching and learning have led to more pupil-led activity in Key Stage 4 and increased pupil motivation through demonstrating the relevance of learning. The excellent curriculum and outstanding partnership arrangements are also linked strongly to initiatives relating to the school's specialist status.

The school has good capacity to improve. Since the last inspection, there have been clear improvements in the care, guidance and support offered and in the curriculum, both of which are now graded outstanding. At the same time, overall attainment has

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risen steadily and gaps in performance between boys and girls have narrowed. The school's self-evaluation is accurate and improvement plans are well focused.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve learning and progress through assessing pupils' progress in lessons more systematically.
- Improve teaching through making more frequent use of active learning that engages pupils' interest and accelerates learning.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**2**

Pupils make good progress in their lessons and achieve well. They particularly enjoy lessons where they understand how their learning can be applied in other contexts. Pupils learn at a good rate through their good attitudes and willingness to take part. They work well in groups and make ready contributions to class discussions. Lesson observations and the school's monitoring data show that the school has successfully addressed the previously different rates of progress of boys and girls. Similarly, the underachievement of low ability boys, notable in the 2008 examination results, is no longer apparent, and this group now makes satisfactory progress. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress as a result of the strong support that they receive from learning support assistants. Inspectors observed some notable examples of good practice in support for these pupils: for example, in citizenship, and hospitality and catering lessons, interventions from learning support assistants were key to the pupils playing a full part in the lesson and matching the good progress being made by the rest of the class. Data provided by the school suggest that examination results in 2009 are slightly higher overall compared with those that demonstrated above average attainment in 2008.

Pupils demonstrate good social, moral, spiritual and cultural development. Pupils appear happy and their questionnaire responses confirm that they enjoy the range of provision that the school offers. Different groups of pupils mix well, both in lessons and around the school. Pupils behave well, with some examples of outstanding behaviour seen during the inspection. Links with several countries overseas, for example a webcam link with an Egyptian school, are effective in helping pupils to develop their cultural awareness.

Pupils understand risks and behave safely in lessons and around the school. They know who they can turn to if they have a problem and are confident that appropriate action will be taken if, for example, they suffered from any form of bullying. Evidence of pupils' good understanding of what constitutes a healthy lifestyle comes from the increasing numbers who take advantage of the healthy options available at lunchtime and the large numbers who participate in physical activities. Pupils demonstrate a good range of workplace skills that contribute to their future well-being. For example, pupils work well together in teams and consider alternative ways of presenting information that will suit the audience. In addition, pupils' excellent attendance and good punctuality

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demonstrate good life skills as well as contributing to their good achievement.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	2
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	1
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	1
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

The majority of lessons are good or better and, as a result, pupils learn at a good rate. Teachers have a good knowledge of their subject and use their knowledge of the pupils to plan work that provides a suitable level of challenge. Pupils are willing to take part and offer answers, encouraged by the teachers' good questioning skills.

The excellent curriculum offers a wide range of opportunities at both key stages, and is organised flexibly so it can provide for individual pupils' needs. Coherence and progression are key features that help to prepare students well for post-16 courses at other institutions. The curriculum is highly innovative, involving extensive use of learning opportunities in the local community, particularly in applied learning courses. A daily 'coaching' period, which focuses on learning and how to remove barriers to learning, makes imaginative and flexible use of time. The curriculum caters well for able pupils through opportunities for early entry to some GCSE subjects. Partnerships are extensive and support pupils' good personal and academic outcomes.

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low.

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Both pupils and parents pay tribute to the strong sense of security that the school provides. They are highly positive about the guidance given on option choices, post-16 courses and possible future careers. Staff know their pupils well. Teachers' highly-effective coaching role allows specific needs to be understood and targeted. Vulnerable pupils get exceptional support but expectations of work and behaviour remain high. An emphasis on building confidence and self-esteem among vulnerable pupils is particularly successful. The widespread use of outside agencies and experts help to effect swift and precise intervention. Teachers are well informed about special needs, although they do not always make full use of support assistants in individual lessons. Pupils value highly the half-termly reviews that help them to focus on their progress. Strategies to improve attendance have been effective in maintaining high levels of attendance and have kept the number of persistent absentees well below the national average.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	1
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

School leaders have been successful in building a team of staff who share a common goal focused on school improvement. Teachers feel encouraged to develop their professional skills and to innovate; results from the inspection questionnaires indicate that they are unanimous in their support for the school's leaders. The school uses challenging targets well with the result that examination results have risen steadily in recent years. The school's commitment to promoting equal opportunities is demonstrated by its successful focus on narrowing a previous gap in progress between different groups. In addition, the school has successfully challenged stereotypes, resulting in more girls opting for subjects traditionally associated with boys. Senior leaders, together with strong support from middle leaders, have successfully improved many aspects of teaching and learning and have a strong record of developing the curriculum to improve pupils' performance.

Leaders and managers evaluate the school's performance accurately. Their assessments of the quality of teaching and the school's strengths and weaknesses match closely those made by inspectors. Similarly, improvement planning focuses on appropriate areas. However, both evaluation and improvement planning focus on general issues and currently give insufficient emphasis to the performance of groups of pupils or the participation of different groups in school activities. The governors play a suitably supportive role in the development of the school. Governors have a wide range of skills

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which are matched well to different aspects of the school's work. As a result, they make an effective contribution to directing and monitoring the school's performance, for example on child protection or financial matters. Safeguarding procedures are good. Staff and governors have appropriate training, and all necessary checks are carried out. Parents appreciate the good quality of communication with school, which includes the use of email and the school's website. The school is beginning to provide parents with more information on how they can help their children, although at present this is uneven. The school engages in an impressive range of partnerships. These relate to academic courses and particularly to the applied learning courses in both key stages. Many partnerships centre on the school's specialisms and contribute to pupils' achievement, with evidence of improved examination performance in many areas of applied learning. In addition, the school's partnership arrangements, for example with the Children's Trust, the community police officer and the local community theatre, have a strong impact on the extended services that the school provides. The school promotes community cohesion well. It analyses its context accurately and in detail and places due emphasis on developing pupils' understanding of different ethnic, religious and socio-economic circumstances. This contributes to pupils' personal development, particularly their good cultural understanding. A wide range of initiatives have been undertaken, although the school could do more to evaluate the impact of its actions.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	2
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Views of parents and carers

A large number of parents contributed their views to the inspection team through the

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parental questionnaire. A large majority of replies indicated positive views of the school. Parents appreciate the care provided for their children and believe that the school provides a safe and welcoming environment, confirming the view of the inspection team that this is a strength of the school. Although a very large majority believe that the school takes account of their suggestions and concerns, a few expressed negative views on this subject.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Ribblesdale School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 388 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 1289 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	150	39	223	57	7	2	5	1
The school keeps my child safe	126	32	238	61	13	3	1	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	132	34	207	53	20	5	1	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	129	33	214	55	11	3	1	0
The teaching is good at this school	136	35	209	54	11	3	1	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	87	22	230	59	34	9	2	1
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	96	25	231	60	27	7	4	1
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	109	28	223	57	8	2	3	1
The school meets my child's particular needs	116	30	224	58	9	2	4	1
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	117	30	205	53	20	5	6	2
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	67	17	248	64	27	7	4	1
The school is led and managed effectively	108	28	228	59	12	3	2	1
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	158	41	202	52	7	2	2	1

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools inspected between September 2007 and July 2008

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	39	58	3	0
Primary schools	13	50	33	4
Secondary schools	17	40	34	9
Sixth forms	18	43	37	2
Special schools	26	54	18	2
Pupil referral units	7	55	30	7
All schools	15	49	32	5

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above were reported in The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills 2007/08.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.■ The quality of teaching.■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships.■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



Inspection of Ribblesdale School, Clitheroe, BB7 1EJ

You will recall that recently a team of inspectors and I inspected your school. This letter is to let you know what we found. We enjoyed meeting with some of you and talking to others in classrooms and around the school. Thank you for your openness and courtesy. We judged Ribblesdale to be a good school. You achieve well because of the good teaching that you receive and the excellent levels of care, guidance and support that the school provides. The outstanding curriculum meets your needs extremely well, and has had a notable impact in improving your motivation and attitudes to work. You make an excellent contribution to the school and the local community, for example through applied learning courses and the Young Enterprise scheme.

You learn well particularly when teachers challenge you to think hard about your learning and to give explanations of your reasoning as well as your methods. In the pupils' questionnaire a very large majority of you told us that teachers and support staff explain how to improve your work and that you feel well prepared for the future. You also told us that behaviour in the school is good. The inspection team agrees with your views.

To help the school become even better, we have said that senior leaders should:

- improve learning and progress through assessing progress in lessons more systematically
- improve teaching through making more frequent use of active learning that engages your interest and accelerates learning.

You can play your part in making Ribblesdale a better school. First, keep up your excellent attendance; second, if you are not certain that you understand something then make sure that you ask for help as soon as possible.

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