

Ricards Lodge High School

Lake Road, Wimbledon, London SW19 7HB

Inspection dates

31 October and 7–8 November 2017

Overall effectiveness	Outstanding
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Outstanding
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Outstanding
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Outstanding
Outcomes for pupils	Outstanding
16 to 19 study programmes	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an outstanding school

- Leaders and governors have significantly improved the school since the previous inspection. It is now outstanding.
- Leaders have a deep and accurate understanding of the school. They tackle any weaknesses quickly and head on.
- The school community has turned the school's vision of 'Trust, Equality, Resilience and Aspiration' into a reality. Leaders fully prepare pupils, and students in the sixth form, for their role as women in the 21st century.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) awareness is exceptional. The impact of the 'Youth That Care' and 'LGBTQ+' groups are just two examples of how pupils educate and support each other on staying safe and promoting equality of opportunity.
- Leaders ensure that teachers receive the high-quality training that they need to improve their teaching. As a result, teachers are highly skilled in meeting pupils' different needs. Teachers challenge pupils to think deeply about their learning.
- Leaders take great care in designing the curriculum. They evaluate the impact of their decisions thoroughly, including gathering pupils' views. As a result, the curriculum meets the interests, needs and abilities of all pupils exceptionally well.
- Outcomes are outstanding. Pupils achieve well above national averages in English, mathematics and almost all other subjects. Current pupils continue to make substantial progress across the curriculum.
- Pupils have highly positive attitudes to learning. They take their learning, including homework, seriously. Pupils move around the school calmly and sensibly. They treat adults and each other with respect.
- Leaders have created a school culture where safeguarding comes first. Pupils are well cared for and supported throughout their time at the school. Leaders are proactive in ensuring that they identify, help and manage any welfare concerns as soon as they arise.
- In 2015, pupils' progress in modern foreign languages was well above the national average. Since then, there has been some variability in either French or Spanish. Outcomes in German remain strong.
- The sixth form is good. Students make substantial progress on work-related courses. However, their overall progress on academic courses, although improving, is not outstanding.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve outcomes on academic courses in the sixth form.
- Further strengthen pupils' progress in French and Spanish so that it matches the outstanding progress they make in their other subjects.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Outstanding

- Leaders and the governing body are highly ambitious for the school. They have fully addressed the areas for improvement from the previous inspection. Pupils now receive an outstanding quality of education.
- The senior leadership team is honest in its evaluation of the school. Members of the team can articulate clearly the strengths of the school but at the same time they do not rest on their laurels. They know where they have to make further changes and plans to achieve their goals are well thought through.
- Leaders have carefully designed a highly effective programme for staff development. The high quality, personal approach to support, particularly for middle leaders and teachers, is excellent. As a result, middle leaders are confident and skilled in leading their subject areas effectively. Teachers are fully equipped with the skills to deliver their subjects well. The quality of teaching is outstanding.
- The school shares its leadership and teaching expertise with other schools. The headteacher also coaches other female leaders who have aspirations for headship.
- Staff enjoy working at the school. They feel well supported and report that leaders listen to their views and take them into account when making decisions. Teachers new to the school and to the profession cannot speak highly enough about the quality of support, care and training that they receive.
- Leaders keep the curriculum under constant review. They are bold in taking risks to try out new approaches, including how to better meet the needs of pupils who require support with literacy and numeracy. Leaders use progress information as well as feedback from pupils and staff to evaluate whether or not their approaches are working effectively.
- When structuring the key stage 4 curriculum, senior leaders take into account what pupils want to study after Year 11. The curriculum includes academic and work-related courses. A range of technology and performing arts courses are also available. These are open to all pupils and are highly valued. Teachers and leaders support the curriculum with a wide and popular mixture of clubs, tailored to meet the needs of each year group. Teachers also offer an extensive range of visits and trips.
- Leaders and governors use the additional funding that they receive for different groups of pupils exceptionally well. They carefully analyse the progress of disadvantaged pupils and will change how they use this funding when they need to. As a result, over time, disadvantaged pupils make progress that is either in line with or above that of other pupils nationally. Pupils in Year 7 who need support to catch up with their peers in literacy and numeracy make excellent progress.
- The leadership and management of support for pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities, including those in the small, specialist provision, is highly effective. These pupils make progress that is line with or above that of other pupils nationally. Leaders use funding to ensure that pupils who have more complex needs receive the support that they need.

- The school's focus on developing pupils' awareness of SMSC issues is exceptional. When inspectors asked pupils to talk about their school, they often responded with the words 'opportunities' and 'inclusive'. Pupils have a wide range of leadership opportunities and readily take advantage of them.
- Pupils have a deep understanding of the world around them. They are very aware of issues facing other children and communities in other countries. Pupils also give back to their community. For example, last year they raised close to £9,000 for their chosen charities. The pupil-led 'SMSC group' also worked with a national charity to organise a picnic for the whole school, linked with helping pupils to develop an understanding of equality and trust. The range of SMSC activities that pupils engage in, together with the school's work on democracy, equality and tolerance, has resulted in pupils having a clear understanding of fundamental British values.

Governance of the school

- The governing body collectively offers highly effective support and challenge to senior leaders. Members of the board have a deep and well-informed understanding of the school.
- Governors receive a wide range of information from school leaders. They are careful to ask questions and probe further, particularly in relation to how well different groups of pupils achieve. The governors also undertake visits to the school to meet staff and pupils to check on the impact of the school's improvement strategies. Following visits, the governor or governors involved then report back their thoughts to the full governing body.
- Governors are committed and ambitious for the school's future. They have also engaged in a self-review of their own work and established where they feel they could be even sharper in their analysis of the school's work.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Leaders have a clear understanding of the potential risks to pupils' well-being and have ensured that staff are trained well in safeguarding. As a result, staff are proactive in helping pupils to learn about how to stay safe and how to manage risks. Leaders ensure that appropriate early help, including support from external agencies, is put in place whenever it is needed. Leaders keep accurate records of any welfare concerns and follow up on any concerns as soon as they arise.
- The school has created a culture of openness and trust. Pupils talk about their emotions and feelings. As a result, pupils report that the school's work to help them manage their emotional and physical well-being meets their needs well.
- Pupils know how to keep themselves safe, both inside and outside of school. They learn from and work with external agencies on safety-related topics. Parents and carers, including those who replied to Ofsted's questionnaire, Parent View, and the school's own parental surveys, overwhelmingly confirm that they feel their children are safe in school and well looked after.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Outstanding

- Teachers have a thorough understanding of their subject. They use their subject knowledge to explain concepts well and to engage pupils in their learning. For example, in a geography lesson the teacher carefully selected resources which captivated pupils in learning about tropical storms.
- Teachers know their pupils well. They use a range of learning activities to match work to suit pupils' different needs and abilities. They have high expectations of all groups of pupils.
- Following the school's policy, teachers regularly set meaningful homework. Pupils find it useful and take it seriously. Pupils also regularly attend extra-curricular activities. These are just some examples of the high expectations that pupils have about helping themselves to learn even more.
- Teachers pose questions and organise activities that encourage pupils to think deeply about their learning. Teachers check on the accuracy of pupils' understanding and quickly correct any misconceptions. The most able pupils also feel that teachers extend their knowledge, skills and understanding. One pupil's comment, which echoed the views of others, was, 'Teachers challenge us and prepare us for what is coming.'
- Teachers are enthusiastic about their subjects. This spreads to the pupils, who are equally enthusiastic about learning. The positive working relationships between the teacher and pupils, as well as between pupils, combine to create an enjoyable learning atmosphere. Pupils cooperate well together and settle to work quickly.
- Pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities, including those pupils in the specialist provision, make substantial progress from their starting points. Leaders use personalised and tailored support packages to meet pupils' needs. Teachers are inclusive in their approach and work well with additional adults to support pupils effectively.
- Teachers ensure that their teaching challenges stereotypes and fully promotes equality of opportunity including when learning takes place outside of the classroom, for example in assemblies.
- Overall, as a result of excellent staff training, the quality of teaching is consistently highly effective in almost all subjects across the school. Leaders have appropriate plans in place to further improve the quality of teaching in French and Spanish.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Outstanding

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding.
- Leaders provide a wide and effective range of ways for pupils to engage in the working life of the school. As a result, pupils develop into confident, mature, reflective and resilient young women.

- An example of this is the 'Youth That Care' (YTC) group. This is a group of key stage 4 pupils, trained by the school to help provide support, to deliver training and to break down barriers for other pupils at the school. The work of the YTC is highly valued by pupils, particularly those in key stage 3.
- The school's work on inclusion and challenging stereotypes has established a culture where differences are celebrated. The school's high-profile 'LGBTQ+' group (providing support for issues in relation to sexuality) is another example of the school's outstanding work to promote equality. Pupils also learn about and discuss other topical issues in the world around them, for example conflict in other countries.
- Pupils reported, as supported by school records, that bullying is rare and dealt with effectively. Pupils understand the range of different types of bullying. Pupils told inspectors that adults take any concerns seriously and will deal with them quickly.
- Parents also value the work that the school does on inclusion. One parent commented: 'I think the school has taught them to have high aspirations and to treat everyone with tolerance and respect.' This chimed with other parents' views.
- Careers advice and guidance are plentiful and of a high quality. The school's careers and employability programme is reviewed and adapted regularly. The school ensures that pupils have impartial guidance, for example on courses and events held in other sixth forms. Most pupils report that they find the careers guidance useful and relevant.
- Pupils who attend the local authority alternative provision for their education are receiving the support they need, sometimes with external agencies involved. Pupils follow the right range of courses to match their needs. Leaders monitor their attendance regularly and any safeguarding concerns are shared quickly.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding.
- Pupils set themselves high standards. They wear their uniforms with pride. Their behaviour in lessons and around the school is excellent. The school is calm. Pupils of all ages and backgrounds mix well with each other. They are always keen and enthusiastic about supporting each other.
- Pupils take pride in their work, which is of high quality and consistently well presented.
- Leaders and teachers have high expectations of pupils. The number of fixed-term exclusions is well below the national average. However, leaders will use a fixed-term exclusion if necessary because poor behaviour, even though rare, is not tolerated.
- Attendance overall is above the national average. Persistent absence is below the national average. Attendance for all groups of pupils is improving. The school has effective systems to monitor and encourage regular attendance. They include how leaders use additional funding to pay for external support to improve disadvantaged pupils' attendance. This strategy has been successful.

Outcomes for pupils

Outstanding

- Outcomes have improved rapidly since the previous inspection. In 2017, provisional results show that pupils' progress was significantly above the national averages in all subjects, including English and mathematics. In 2016, pupils' overall progress was also significantly above the national average.
- As a result of outstanding teaching, all groups of current pupils, from their different starting points, are making substantial and significant progress in almost all subjects in each year group.
- Historically, in all subjects, pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds made progress either in line with or above that of other pupils nationally. Similarly, current disadvantaged pupils are making the same, exceedingly strong, progress as their peers. This is because teachers know pupils well and give the right focus to their different learning needs when directing their questions or monitoring pupils' work. Leaders also monitor progress carefully and will act quickly to organise intervention to ensure that any pupil who falls behind can catch up.
- Pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities excel at the school, both emotionally and academically. They make outstanding progress in line with that of their peers. This is because of well-targeted support from leaders, teachers and additional adults.
- Pupils registered in the resourced provision are mainly taught in mainstream lessons and receive literacy, reading, numeracy or other specialist support in the Cedar Base, as required. Leaders monitor their progress carefully. Inspectors reviewed a wide range of these pupils' work and saw them working in the specialist provision and in mainstream classrooms. This evidence revealed that they are achieving well.
- Teachers challenge the most able pupils, both in and out of lessons, so that they make substantial progress across the curriculum. For example, in Year 9 design and technology, over the course of their projects, pupils were producing high-quality work and were able to explain the research, design, production and evaluation processes of what they were making. The most able pupils develop highly effective subject-specific skills across the curriculum.
- Pupils are developing the skills, knowledge and understanding needed to be successful in all the different subjects that they study. Leaders ensure that pupils are exceptionally well prepared for the next steps of their education.
- Pupils' GCSE examination results in Spanish considerably improved in 2017 as did the proportion of pupils who attained the highest grades in both French and Spanish. Attainment in German is well above the national average. However, the progress pupils make in French and Spanish, although improving quickly, is not as substantial as it is in the other subjects that they study.

16 to 19 study programmes

Good

- From their different starting points, students make good overall progress in the sixth form. Those following work-related courses make progress that is above the national average. Students' progress on academic courses, although improving, is in line with the national average.
- Leaders are aware of the sixth form's strengths and weaknesses. They have a clear capacity to improve the sixth form further.
- The quality of teaching is good overall. Teachers have secure subject knowledge, and insight into the assessment procedures for the examinations in their subjects. Teachers engage students well during lessons by using a range of different tasks and activities. However, teaching on academic courses is not fully effective in ensuring that the tasks and activities are suited well to students' different abilities. This prevents some students from making the progress of which they are capable.
- Attendance is high in the sixth form. Students behave well and take their learning seriously. They are effective role models for the girls in Years 7 to 11.
- Leaders provide a wide array of enrichment activities, work shadowing and visits. Staff promote study skills effectively to help students make the transition into the sixth form and to prepare them for the demands of their courses.
- Students enjoy being in the sixth form. They find the careers advice and guidance that they receive useful.
- Most students decide to apply to university and an increasing proportion go on to study at Russell Group universities. As part of the careers programme, the school offers a range of pathways for life after the sixth form. A small number of students choose the employment route for their next step after concluding their sixth form studies.
- The proportion of students who successfully retake GCSE English and/or mathematics and improve their grade is typically above the national average. The proportion of Year 12 students who stay on into Year 13 is improving, with more of them successfully completing their courses.

School details

Unique reference number	102673
Local authority	Merton
Inspection number	10031857

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11 to 19
Gender of pupils	Girls
Gender of pupils in 16 to 19 study programmes	Girls
Number of pupils on the school roll	1,298
Of which, number on roll in 16 to 19 study programmes	152
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Louise Round
Headteacher	Alison Jerrard
Telephone number	020 8946 2208
Website	www.ricardslodge.merton.sch.uk
Email address	office.manager@ricardslodge.merton.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	21–22 March 2013

Information about this school

- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- Ricards Lodge is a larger-than-average-sized secondary school with a small, but growing, sixth form.
- The sixth form, known as 'RR6' is a shared provision with Rutlish School, another local secondary school in Merton.

- The school is a lead school in the Teach Wimbledon teacher training scheme. The school manages the day-to-day provision for the trainees on the secondary programme.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is above the national average.
- The proportion of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is in line with the national average.
- The school has a specialist resource provision, the Cedar Base, for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities. The Cedar Base provides support for pupils' speech, language and communication needs. There are currently seven pupils in the provision. They mainly attend lessons in the main school but receive support in the Cedar Base as required in their education, health and care plans.
- A small number of pupils are educated in alternative, off-site provision. This is through The Smart Centre, a local authority pupil referral unit.
- The school currently meets the government's floor standards which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress by the time they leave school.

Information about this inspection

- The inspection team visited lessons in a range of subjects, some accompanied by school leaders. To evaluate the quality of pupils' learning over time, inspectors also reviewed a wide range of their books including in mathematics and modern foreign languages. The lead inspector also evaluated the provision for pupils in the specialist resource provision.
- The inspection team held a range of meetings with senior and middle leaders to evaluate the impact of their work. Inspectors also held meetings with the governing body, teachers new to the profession and different groups of pupils and sixth-form students. An inspector met with a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors evaluated 42 replies to Parent View, Ofsted's questionnaire for parents. Inspectors also reviewed a letter received from a parent. Inspectors evaluated 42 replies to Ofsted's survey for staff and 150 replies to the pupil survey.
- Inspectors scrutinised a variety of documentation provided by leaders, including: internal assessment information for pupils in all year groups; leaders' self-evaluation; improvement plans; outcomes from school surveys; minutes of governing body meetings; attendance and behaviour information; a variety of school policies; the single central record of recruitment checks and a wide range of other information relating to the safeguarding of pupils.

Inspection team

Sam Hainey, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
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Peter Rodin	Ofsted Inspector
James Whiting	Ofsted Inspector
Yvonne Chisholm	Ofsted Inspector
Kanwaljit Singh	Ofsted Inspector

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In the report, 'disadvantaged pupils' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route. www.gov.uk/pupil-premium-information-for-schools-and-alternative-provision-settings.

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