

Tribal Education
1-4 Portland Square
Bristol
BS8 2RR

T 0300 123 1231
Text Phone: 0161 6188524
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
www.ofsted.gov.uk
Direct T 0845 123 6001
Direct F 0117 315 0430
email: sarah.cartlidge@tribalgroup.com



10 March 2011

Mr John Didymus
Headteacher
Ridgeway School
Moorland Road
Plympton
Plymouth
PL7 2RS

Dear Mr Didymus

Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools: monitoring inspection of Ridgeway School

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when John Worgan and I inspected your school on 9 March 2011, for the time you gave to our telephone discussion and for the information which you and your senior leaders provided before and during the inspection. I should also be grateful if you could pass on our thanks to the members of the governing body, staff and students who we met during our visit.

Since the last inspection the number of students on roll has decreased slightly. The school is part of a consortium with three local secondary schools and has strengthened its partnership with these schools. The senior leadership team has been reorganised and a new head of science has been appointed.

As a result of the inspection on 7 October 2009, the school was asked to address the most important areas for improvement which are set out in the annex to this letter.

Having considered all the evidence I am of the opinion that at this time the school has made satisfactory progress in making improvements and satisfactory progress in demonstrating a better capacity for sustained improvement.

Attainment fell in 2010, with the proportion of students gaining five higher grade GCSEs being significantly below the national average. Attainment in English and mathematics, and particularly in science, was below average. Results were affected by a relatively high proportion of students with challenging needs who joined the school in Years 10 and 11. However, given students' starting points, their progress overall was inadequate. Students in the sixth form made broadly satisfactory progress in A-level and AS examinations, although there was variation between students' performance in different subjects.

September 2010



Since September 2010, several changes have been introduced that are having a marked impact on improving students' achievement. Current data show students are making better progress and that by the end of the current academic year they are on course to achieve challenging targets and to gain improved results in GCSE examinations.

In English, a new syllabus and a range of texts have been introduced which capture more effectively students' interest. Targeted intervention for students who enter the school in Year 7 with low levels of literacy has been reorganised to include a sharper focus on improving writing. In mathematics, changes have been made to the composition of groups and intensive support has been provided for students who need greater preparation for sitting examinations. A number of students in Years 10 and 11, some of whom have transferred recently from other schools, have experienced difficulty settling and in applying themselves to learning. A programme of behaviour management, founded on a close working partnership with students' families, has helped to improve the attendance and achievement of this group. The school is recognised for its expertise in teaching students who have needs on the autistic spectrum. These students usually work alongside their peers in lessons and are achieving well.

The school has used its specialism in science effectively to work closely with other schools in the consortium and to provide more vocational courses for students in Years 10 and 11. Students appreciate the wider range of courses available which they feel are more closely matched to their aptitudes and interests. These curriculum changes have not yet had time to demonstrate their full impact on students' examination results and targets related to the school's specialist subject have not been achieved. However, current evidence shows that students are making much better progress in science and that attainment has improved markedly.

The school has introduced more opportunities for students to be actively engaged in their learning. Teachers are using questioning more effectively to check students' understanding and a programme has been introduced to develop students' independent learning and study skills. Students report they enjoy their lessons and during the inspection they displayed positive attitudes to learning. The school recognises that a stronger emphasis on what students are learning is needed in some lessons in order to accelerate the rate of progress. Assessment information is being used more effectively to plan lessons. Students are better able to reflect on their learning, are aware of the level at which they are working and know what they need to do to improve. However, inconsistency remains between subjects in the use of assessment information, and marking is not always sufficiently detailed and frequent to help students improve their work.

The reorganised senior leadership team has a much clearer focus on raising standards. A new cycle of monitoring teaching and learning has been introduced following advice from the local authority. As a result, senior leaders have a more

detailed understanding of the strengths and areas for improvement in teaching and learning, and they are taking appropriate action to secure improvement. The school has introduced recently a new system for tracking students' progress and for setting challenging targets. The system is having a positive impact on raising expectations, although further development is needed to ensure that it is used effectively to identify the progress of different groups. An overarching plan for raising attainment across the school has been drawn up in the current term which contains suitable priorities. This is a positive step. The use of data on students' progress to inform departmental plans has improved but remains variable. In some subjects, plans do not focus sufficiently on the gains students are expected to make following the introduction of new initiatives.

The school has received a good level of support from the local authority, particularly in developing the use of assessment and in sharpening the monitoring of teaching and learning. The school's close partnership with other schools in the consortium has contributed significantly to the school's curriculum development and to the professional development of staff.

I hope that you have found the inspection helpful in promoting improvement in your school. This letter will be posted on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Andrew Redpath

Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in October 2009

- Focus leadership at all levels more sharply on tracking of student progress in order to raise expectations in the classroom by:
 - implementing more rigorous monitoring systems making it the priority objective in all departmental improvement plans.
- Increase the effectiveness of teaching on students' learning and progress by:
 - ensuring that teachers use assessment information to provide more challenging questions providing more opportunities for students to reflect on their learning in lessons.