

Ridgewood School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	137603
Local authority	Not Applicable
Inspection number	387187
Inspection dates	18–19 January 2012
Lead inspector	Katrina Gueli HMI

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

Type of school	Academy
School category	Non-Maintained
Age range of pupils	11–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1,348
Of which number on roll in the sixth form	103
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Brian Stones
Headteacher	Christopher Hoyle
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
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Introduction

Inspection team

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Her Majesty's Inspector
Additional inspector
Additional inspector
Additional inspector
Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. Inspectors observed 42 lessons seeing 42 different teachers. Inspectors also made a series of shorter visits to a range of lessons to scrutinise students' work. Meetings were held with groups of students, representatives of the governing body and staff. Inspectors observed the academy's work and scrutinised data relating to students' current attainment and progress, their behaviour and records of the academy's monitoring of provision. Inspectors took account of the responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) and also considered the responses contained in the questionnaires completed by students, staff and 157 parents and carers.

Information about the school

Ridgewood is a larger than average-sized secondary school. It became an academy in November 2011. A new sixth form was opened in September 2011 and at the time of the inspection only Year 12 students were on roll. The academy is a specialist in engineering, related technologies and applied learning subjects. The school meets the current government floor standards. The proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals is low as is the proportion of students from minority ethnic groups. The percentages of students supported at School Action, School Action Plus or with a statement of special educational needs are all below average. The academy has achieved the Healthy School status and the Safemark award.

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	3
Achievement of pupils	3
Quality of teaching	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils	2
Leadership and management	3

Key Findings

- Ridgewood is a satisfactory academy.
- Students' achievement is satisfactory overall. They achieve well in the academy's specialist subject areas of engineering, related technologies and applied learning.
- Students' attainment at the end of Key Stage 4 has been above average for the majority of indicators over the last three years.
- Given their starting points, the proportion of students gaining the highest grades at GCSE and in equivalent qualifications is too low in many subjects.
- The percentage of students making the expected progress in GCSE English, mathematics and science has been lower than the national average over the last three years.
- Current data and observation of lessons indicate that progress in GCSE English, mathematics and science has improved and is now satisfactory.
- The proportion of good or better teaching is too low to secure students' good progress and achievement overall.
- Good practice exists in teachers' use of assessment to check the learning of all students during lessons in order to adjust teaching and improve their learning in lessons and over time. There are also examples of effective diagnostic marking that ensures students know how to improve. These good aspects of assessment practice are not consistent across the school.
- Most students behave well and their attendance is high.
- The academy provides a safe environment in which students develop well the skills and aptitudes needed for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
- The diverse curriculum meets students' needs, interests and aspirations well.

- Leaders and managers have a clear understanding of the academy's strengths and weakness. There is an increased urgency with which weaknesses are being addressed.
- The effectiveness with which the findings of monitoring and evaluation have been used to improve teaching quality and drive improvements in students' achievement has been limited. This is because monitoring and evaluation have not focused sharply enough on students' progress relative to their starting points or the impact of teaching on their progress in the classroom, particularly in the core subjects.
- Recent recruitment, due largely to the introduction of post-16 provision, has strengthened the academy's leadership team and enhanced the capacity of the academy to improve the quality of teaching.
- Students who have special educational needs, disabled students and those whose circumstances may make them vulnerable to underachievement are supported well by school-based staff and effective use of multi-agency partnerships.
- The sixth form, although newly formed, is good and has provided increased choice for students' progression routes post-16. It is meeting a local need well.

Schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve students' progress and increase the proportion of students gaining the highest grades at GCSE and in equivalent qualifications by:
 - ensuring that 70% of teaching is good or better by July 2013 by sharing best practice and providing well-targeted support, from both within the school and beyond, to help teachers improve their classroom skills
 - increasing the effectiveness with which teachers assess the learning of all students during lessons in order to adjust teaching and improve their learning in lessons and over time
 - extending good practice in the marking of students' work and the provision of written feedback to ensure that students know how well they have done and what they need to do to improve
 - ensuring that approaches to teaching capitalise on students' willingness to be active participants in their learning and develop their confidence and resilience to tackle challenging tasks successfully.
- Increase the effectiveness with which the outcomes of monitoring and evaluation are used to drive improvement by:
 - ensuring that evaluation is incisive and pinpoints areas for development sharply
 - targeting improvement actions in a timely way to accelerate the pace of improvement
 - incorporating quantifiable success criteria in improvement plans and monitoring processes so that the impact of actions can be measured accurately.

Main Report

Achievement of pupils

Students' attainment is above the national average for most benchmarks. They have been successful in gaining GCSE and equivalent qualifications, including those in English and mathematics at a level that has enabled virtually all Year 11 students to progress into education, training or employment over the last three years. However, in GCSE English, mathematics and science in particular, the lack of focus on tracking students' progress relative to their starting points has led to underachievement, despite above average attainment. The academy has rightly prioritised this as an area for improvement and taken effective action to tackle students' underperformance, particularly for those with middle or higher levels of prior attainment. Consequently, although students' learning in the lessons observed was variable across the academy, their current progress is at least satisfactory in all subjects. The findings of the inspection with regard to students' progress do not match the views of parents and carers; most of those who responded felt that their child was making good progress. Disabled students and those with special educational needs make similar progress to that of their peers nationally. The effective additional provision for students with special educational needs being supported at School Action enables them to achieve well. When students experience good teaching they maintain concentration and participate eagerly in learning activities including group discussion, practical tasks and in responding to teacher questions. They show a willingness to listen to the ideas of others and work well collaboratively to develop their understanding or master a new skill. However, too often learning slows because students have to listen for extended periods of time and they becoming passive recipients rather than active participants in the lesson.

Quality of teaching

The quality of teaching observed during the inspection ranged from outstanding to inadequate. All teaching observed in the sixth form was judged to be good or better. The good or better teaching observed placed students' learning and progress at the centre of planned activities; teachers' expectations of what students could achieve were high and students were engaged and challenged by meaningful tasks. Purposeful interactions between the teacher and students facilitated learning well, particularly in the sixth form. A few good examples of effective planning to support students' social, moral, spiritual and cultural development were also observed. In one business studies lesson this promoted thoughtful discussion and consideration of the impact of establishing a business. Good assessment for, and of, learning informed teachers' planning and drove the delivery of the lesson. For example, in a geography lesson the involvement of students in both peer- and self-assessment led to very high levels of student confidence and independence in preparation for their forthcoming examination. Good teaching incorporated activities that met the needs of all groups of students well.

However, this good or better practice was observed in only a minority of lessons at Key Stages 3 and 4. Consequently, inspection findings do not align with the views expressed by parents and carers in the questionnaires where most thought their child was taught well. Too often teachers failed to engage students meaningfully or too much 'teacher talk' limited opportunities for students' active engagement and, consequently, their concentration was not sustained. These features resulted in slower progress. Teachers often covered all

intended work and were seen to use questioning effectively to check the understanding of individuals. However, there was inconsistency in the use of a good range of assessment techniques in lessons to monitor whether successful learning was taking place for all students or whether teaching needed to be adjusted to accelerate progress.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Most students and staff, and the large majority of parents and carers believe that behaviour around the academy and in lessons is good. A minority of parents and carers and students raised concerns about disruptions to learning in lessons. This was investigated in detail by inspectors. In discussions with academy staff they acknowledge the negative impact of recent and specific issues including higher than usual staff absence and concerns about the teaching quality of a very small number of teachers. This had resulted in a short-term, contrasting picture to the typically very positive view of behaviour over time in the academy. Overall, inspectors found that there were few incidents that required individuals to be isolated given the number of students in the academy and exclusion levels are very low. Students conduct themselves well in lessons, even when teaching does not inspire or enthuse. The movement of students around the complex site is orderly and they are punctual to lessons despite the distance between different teaching blocks. Students are respectful of their peers and adults, and most students say they feel safe in the academy. Any inappropriate behaviour is carefully managed and most students have the view that incidents of bullying are dealt with well. Specific individuals who have difficulty in meeting the academy's expectations for behaviour are very effectively supported by the in-house pastoral team and the judicious use of external multi-agency partnerships. A number of parents and carers commented positively about the impact of the academy's work with their child in this respect.

Year 7 students settle in quickly, assisted by a targeted mentoring programme and range of transition activities. Students have a secure knowledge of how to keep themselves safe in a range of situations, although some students who met with inspectors lacked a deeper understanding of steps to secure their safety when using the Internet out of school. Inspectors also found evidence of students not always choosing to keep themselves safe because they leave the school site at lunchtime without the permission of their parents or carers. This behaviour is dealt with appropriately when it is brought to the academy's attention. The academy is also beginning to take steps to improve on-site catering facilities and consult on the timings of the day to resolve this issue permanently.

Leadership and management

Leaders, including the governing body have an ambitious vision for Ridgewood which has driven the conversion into an academy and the establishment of effective post-16 provision. Work to bring about these changes has been a key challenge for senior leaders and the dominant item on the governing body's agenda during the last two years. Consequently, the governing body has not focused sufficiently on holding academy leaders to account for students' performance, despite receiving detailed information from school leaders. Strengths in relation to the specialist areas of engineering, related technologies and applied learning have been sustained as distinctive and very successful features of the academy since the last inspection. Systems to monitor students' achievement have recently been developed and students' progress is now being tracked with the same emphasis as their attainment. This has raised teachers' expectations of students' performance leading to greater challenge in the classroom for students, particularly those with middle or high levels of prior

attainment. Links between the findings of quality assurance and systems to manage staff performance have also been strengthened, increasing the ability of senior leaders to hold teachers and other leaders to account regarding students' progress.

The academy's promotion of equality and tackling of discrimination is satisfactory with appropriate action taken to close the gaps in performance between different groups. For example, year managers and other pastoral staff are working coherently with subject leaders to identify and address identified student underperformance of individuals and groups. Self-evaluation by senior and middle leaders is broadly accurate and improvement priorities have been correctly identified. Leaders at all levels have a shared understanding of major weaknesses to be addressed and can highlight where action taken has already begun to bring about the improvement needed. However, in a number of key subject areas it is still too soon to see the full impact of this recent work on students' achievement. Consequently, the academy's capacity to improve further is satisfactory. Development plans incorporate the correct priorities but success criteria do not always clearly identify quantifiable targets for teaching quality or students' achievement across all departments. This limits the effectiveness and accuracy with which school improvement can be measured.

Within the academy, professional development opportunities for staff, to enhance their leadership skills or their classroom practice, are wide-ranging and promote the sharing of good practice between curriculum subjects effectively. Leaders with responsibility for the improvement of teaching and learning are well-equipped to drive further developments. The academy has been proactive in seeking and successfully adopting external best practice to enhance systems and provision. There is a strong commitment across the academy to improving students' achievement and virtually all staff who responded to the questionnaire felt they were valued. The curriculum is good. The breadth and relevance of the curriculum, a strength identified at the last inspection, has been sustained. Curriculum enrichment, including themed days related to the academy's specialist subjects and extensive extra-curricular provision contribute well to students' enjoyment and their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. However, the promotion of students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory overall, because regular planned opportunities for its promotion within subject lessons are less well-embedded. Arrangements for safeguarding students meet current government requirements.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all 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

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	46	46	8	0
Primary schools	8	47	40	5
Secondary schools	14	38	40	8
Special schools	28	48	20	4
Pupil referral units	15	50	29	5
All schools	11	46	38	6

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2010 to 31 August 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Behaviour	how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and 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 governors and 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:	inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school.
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.
Safety	how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.

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.



20 January 2012

Dear Students

Inspection of Ridgewood School, Doncaster, DN5 7UB

You may remember that I visited your academy recently with a team of inspectors. We would like to thank you for the time you gave to our discussions both in meetings and more informally around the academy.

We found that Ridgewood is a satisfactory academy which enables virtually all of you to gain the qualifications required to progress into education, employment or training. Your achievement in the academy's specialist subject areas of engineering, related technologies and applied learning is typically good. However, many of you do not make good progress in English, mathematics or science despite often reaching levels of attainment that are above the national average. Provision in the newly opened sixth form is good. Inspectors judged that your behaviour in lessons and around school was also good. We were pleased to find that attendance is high and that you demonstrate positive attitudes to learning in the classroom, particularly when the quality of teaching is good or better.

It was, however, a concern to inspectors that some of you choose to leave the school site at lunchtime without the permission of your parents or carers. Teaching quality and the use of assessment to improve your learning was found to be inconsistent, with too little good practice. These are areas we have asked the academy leaders to improve to ensure that more of you make good progress and reach the highest grades in your GCSEs or equivalent qualifications. We have also asked the academy to increase the effectiveness with which it uses findings from evaluating the quality of teaching and your achievement so that improvement is brought about quickly.

We hope that you will continue to play your part in raising your attainment by always striving to do your best work. We wish you every success for the future.

Yours sincerely

Katrina Gueli
Her Majesty's Inspector

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