

The Ridgeway Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	109789
Local Authority	Reading
Inspection number	356624
Inspection dates	9–10 February 2011
Reporting inspector	Christopher Grove

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	189
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Marion Livingston
Headteacher	Colin Lavelle
Date of previous school inspection	29 April 2008
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. They observed 13 lessons taught by nine teachers. Meetings were held with groups of pupils, and with members of the governing body and staff. Inspectors observed the school's work, and looked at analyses of pupils' attainment and progress, records of governing body meetings, the school's development planning and documents relating to monitoring, safeguarding and the curriculum. Inspectors analysed inspection questionnaires returned by 43 parents and carers as well as those completed by ten members of staff and 73 pupils.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at a number of key areas.

- The extent to which the school's monitoring of pupils' outcomes and the quality of provision leads to accurate self-evaluation.
- How effectively the school's teaching and use of assessment information accelerate pupils' progress.
- How well the school's provision promotes pupils' personal development.

Information about the school

The Ridgeway Primary School is located on the outskirts of Reading and is slightly smaller than the average primary school. A majority of pupils are of White British or of other white heritage, and others are from a wide range of different ethnic backgrounds. The number of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is well above average. The proportion of pupils for whom English is an additional language is above average. The number of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, principally behavioural, emotional and social difficulties, or profound and multiple learning difficulties, is broadly average. The Early Years Foundation Stage provision consists of the nursery and the Reception class. The school has achieved national accreditations, including the Healthy Schools, Activemark and Eco Schools (Bronze) awards. A new permanent headteacher joined the school in January 2011, after a period of interim leadership by two different acting headteachers.

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?

3

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

3

Main findings

The school's overall effectiveness is satisfactory. The school's positive ethos shows in pupils' happiness and good behaviour. Most parents and carers agreed that their children enjoy school. One wrote: 'My children enjoy going to this school, and feel safe here.' A second recorded: 'The school is a friendly place to be. All the staff know every child. My children thoroughly enjoy their day at school, every day.' The warm atmosphere is sustained by the high morale of the cohesive team of staff. The very large majority of staff who completed the survey agreed that they are proud of the school and that their contribution is valued.

The good aspects of pupils' personal development are the result of the inclusive ethos and the good quality of the pastoral care. Almost all pupils who completed the questionnaire felt that the adults care about them. Consequently, they feel very safe in school, and make positive contributions to the school and community. Although overall attendance is low, and some pupils are not punctual for the morning session, the school has had considerable success in reducing rapidly the numbers of pupils who are persistent absentees.

Children achieve well in the Early Years Foundation Stage. By the end of Year 6, pupils' attainment is broadly average. Although overall achievement is satisfactory, there are inconsistencies in the rates of progress for different groups of pupils. For example, in 2010, progress in reading and writing was greater than in mathematics, and the progress of girls was better than that of boys.

The quality of teaching is satisfactory. Although some teaching is good, a small proportion is inadequate. The match of activities to pupils of different abilities is generally adequate, but not consistently so. In particular, the extent of challenge for lower-attaining pupils is not always sufficiently high. In the classroom, teachers make satisfactory and improving use of assessment. However, in marking pupils' work, they do not consistently provide advice about improving the quality. Furthermore, target-setting arrangements do not direct pupils sufficiently to the next steps in their learning.

The new headteacher and the senior leadership team have a confident vision for the school and are building successfully on the firm basis established by the interim headteachers. As a result, plans for further improvement are already in hand. The beneficial impact of subject leadership is evident in recent improvements in pupils' attainment, though this has been greater in reading and writing than in mathematics.

The satisfactory impact of the systems for monitoring the school's work have resulted in secure self-evaluation, and this in turn, is leading to improvements in pupils' progress. Provision has improved in the Early Years Foundation Stage over the last year, and children's achievement is higher. Issues for improvement have been effectively addressed.

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For instance, there is greater challenge for pupils of higher ability, which is evident in the broadly average numbers who reach the higher level (Level 5) at the end of Year 6. In the nursery, children's better opportunities to use language and think for themselves show in their improved achievement. Given the evidence of improvements in pupils' outcomes, the school has a satisfactory capacity to sustain further improvement.

Up to 40% of the 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?

- Ensure that pupils, particularly boys, make more consistently good progress, especially in mathematics, by:
 - eliminating the small percentage of inadequate teaching and increasing the proportion of teaching which is good or better
 - ensuring that activities are consistently well matched to pupils' needs, particularly those of lower-attaining pupils.
- Improve the use of assessment across the school so that pupils develop a better understanding of the next steps in their learning in writing and mathematics by:
 - ensuring that marking regularly gives pupils clearer feedback about how to improve their work ♦
 - developing target-setting arrangements to enable teachers to indicate more precisely to pupils the improvements necessary to reach higher levels of attainment. ♦
- By December 2011, improve the school's procedures:
 - to reduce substantially the numbers of pupils who arrive late for school.
 - to promote good attendance by pupils so that their attendance reaches or exceeds the national average

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**3**

Pupils' achievement is satisfactory; however, there are inconsistencies in the progress that different groups of pupils make. In a very good lesson in mathematics in Year 2, pupils made good progress in developing their understanding of multiplication because of the careful preparation of materials, well-judged pace and learning tasks that were well matched to all groups. This allowed the teacher to assess pupils' understanding well and to extend their learning further. In a lesson in science, pupils in Year 3 also made good progress because they had well-planned opportunities to work in teams to test materials for insulation properties, which also involved applying their mathematical knowledge to make measurements. Those pupils who are learning English as an additional language make good progress because they are well supported. Lower attaining pupils, and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, make satisfactory progress, although on occasions tasks are not sufficiently well adapted to provide appropriate levels of challenge for them.

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Most pupils say that they enjoy school. The trusting relationships with staff and other pupils lead to good behaviour in classrooms, assemblies and around the school. The secure building and adults' good care provide a good sense of safety for pupils. Although pupils' overall spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory, their moral and social development is better because of their good behaviour and the positive contributions that they make to their school. For instance, in an exciting assembly conducted by the headteacher, members of the eco council persuasively invited other pupils to join them in a whole-school campaign to recycle batteries to avoid the undesirable environmental effects resulting from landfill dumping.

Pupils understand the importance of physical activities to keep fit, and school lunches offer a healthy meal for some pupils. The Activemark and Healthy Schools awards provide satisfactory support for pupils' healthy lifestyles. Pupils develop satisfactory workplace skills through activities in lessons such as 'talk partners' and through working in teams, and they learn to adopt problem-solving approaches, for instance in some mathematics lessons. Together with their satisfactory skills in literacy and numeracy, this means that they are adequately prepared for the next stage of their education.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	3
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	3
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	3
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	3
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	4
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3

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

How effective is the provision?

The best teaching is characterised by good relationships, a purposeful tone and a lively pace to learning, with high expectations. Teachers' planning often includes tasks that are

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effectively matched to the ability levels of different pupil groups. However, the match is not consistently good, and lower attaining pupils are sometimes not sufficiently well challenged. In the small proportion of inadequate teaching, tasks do not meet pupils' learning needs, and classroom organisation and use of time are poor. Teaching assistants offer good support for learning in groups. When teachers work with the whole class, however, assistants' roles are sometimes less clear.

The use of assessment to support learning, for instance judging pupils' levels of understanding through asking questions, is satisfactory. Teachers regularly mark pupils' work, and offer encouragement, but are not consistent in giving advice about how to improve its quality. In writing and mathematics, pupils' targets do not always guide them towards the next stages in their learning.

The curriculum is appropriately broad, and includes some opportunities to develop basic skills through other subjects. Plans are being implemented to provide an improved curriculum which is designed to engage pupils more fully, including better links between subjects to meet their learning needs. There is some specialist teaching in music, for example, all pupils in Year 3 learn the guitar. The school belongs to a sports partnership which extends satisfactorily the provision for physical activities, such as basketball. There is a good number of extra-curricular clubs offering a range of cultural and sporting activities. Older pupils benefit from an annual residential trip. ♦

The school provides a welcoming environment. Staff are committed to the caring ethos and make good provision to meet pupils' needs. Home visits are part of the good induction arrangements. Links with outside agencies provide satisfactory specialist support, where necessary. In cooperation with the education welfare service, the school has developed strategies to promote better attendance, but these have not had sufficient impact to date in raising attendance levels to average.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	3
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	3
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	3

How effective are leadership and management?

The new headteacher and the senior team have set a fresh direction and communicate a strong desire for further improvement. The new development planning clearly signals high expectations for improvement to the school. However, it is too early to judge the impact of the new leadership team's ambition and drive. The school has regular and effective arrangements to evaluate the quality of teaching and learning, which have had a positive impact, as shown by pupils' improving attainment. Governors demonstrate their strong commitment to the school, and have offered continuity during the transition to the new

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leadership. They know the school's strengths and weaknesses well. They understand the role of 'critical friend', but their challenge for improvement has not been sufficient to address fully the acknowledged areas of weakness.

Leaders are committed to ensuring equal opportunities and to tackling discrimination. However, the promotion of equal opportunities is not better than satisfactory because of gaps between the performance levels of different groups of pupils. At the time of the inspection, the school's systems and procedures met all the requirements for safeguarding. Risk assessment arrangements are effective. There is a satisfactory strategy to promote community cohesion. The school's inclusive ethos and satisfactory links with the neighbourhood ensure effective contributions at the school and local levels. However, the school recognises that there is more to be done to foster pupils' understanding of cohesion at the national and international levels. ♦

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	3
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	3
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	3
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	3
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	3
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	3
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	3
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3

Early Years Foundation Stage

When children enter the school, their knowledge and skills are generally well below expectations for their age. Children make good progress, especially in their social development and in all aspects of language and early literacy skills. By the end of the Reception Year, the great majority achieve well in all aspects of learning and enter Year 1 with attainment that is close to average, although calculation skills are less well developed. Relationships with adults and between children are good. Children learn to behave well and to cooperate. They enjoy the activities on offer and take responsibility for their own learning. In the happy atmosphere of the nursery, there is a broad range of engaging activities. For example, some enjoyed working with the teaching assistant, learning the spelling of objects that they observed using binoculars. The teacher offers children a good model of the use of speech, for instance at snack time when she takes

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opportunities to develop good conversations about the fruits that the children are eating and where they come from. In the well-organised Reception classroom, children make good progress, for example in combining their knowledge of letters and sounds to form new words. Children also learn about healthy lifestyles and keeping themselves safe.

In both the Nursery and Reception classes, there is a good balance between activities that take place indoors and in the outside area and between whole-class work and focused activities in groups. The different areas of the indoor and outdoor spaces are attractively set up to encourage the development of different skills and include good displays, for instance to support children's writing. Teachers' daily and weekly planning is of good quality. Teaching assistants provide good support. However, the match of work to lower-attaining children could sometimes be improved. Teachers keep good records and make good use of their assessments to improve children's progress. The leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage are good. Monitoring of teaching and learning has had a beneficial impact and achievement has improved in recent years. Parents are pleased with what is on offer. One happy parent wrote: 'This is my son's first year in the nursery, and he loves coming to school. I think the staff are brilliant.'

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2

Views of parents and carers

There was a low rate of return of completed questionnaires. Most parents and carers who responded have positive views about The Ridgeway Primary School. Most feel that their children's needs are met and that the school keeps their children safe. Inspectors endorse these judgements. A large majority of parents and carers believe that the school supports a healthy lifestyle. Most think that their child is making enough progress at school. Inspectors judge that pupils make satisfactory progress but that there is scope for improvement.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at The Ridgeway Primary 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 43 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 189 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	21	49	18	42	4	9	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	20	47	22	51	0	0	1	2
My school informs me about my child's progress	16	37	12	28	13	30	1	2
My child is making enough progress at this school	14	33	21	49	8	19	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	19	44	23	53	1	2	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	15	35	20	47	6	14	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	18	42	15	35	8	19	0	0
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)	16	37	17	40	6	14	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	17	40	17	40	9	21	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	18	42	15	35	8	19	2	5
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	15	35	19	44	6	14	1	3
The school is led and managed effectively	15	35	17	40	11	26	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	17	42	18	42	7	16	0	0

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 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	59	35	3	3
Primary schools	9	44	39	7
Secondary schools	13	36	41	11
Sixth forms	15	39	43	3
Special schools	35	43	17	5
Pupil referral units	21	42	29	9
All schools	13	43	37	8

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 are for the period 1 September 2009 to 31 August 2010 and are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2009/10 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

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

Sixth form figures reflect the judgements made for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

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 pupils' 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.



11 February 2011



Dear Pupils



Inspection of The Ridgeway Primary School, Reading RG2 7EL



We would like to thank all of you for your help during the inspection. We enjoyed seeing you in your classrooms and talking to you at breaktimes and lunchtimes. We especially thank those of you who filled in the pupils' questionnaire. Inspectors judge that you go to a satisfactory school.



These are the main things we found out about your school.

- Your school is welcoming and sets a positive climate for your learning.
- You enjoy school, and your behaviour in lessons and around the school is good.
- You have good relationships with the adults who take good care of you.
- You feel very safe in school and have a satisfactory understanding of healthy lifestyles.
- You make good contributions to your school and community.
- Children do well in the Nursery and Reception classes.
- Most of your parents are pleased with your experience at school.
- Your attainment in English and mathematics by the end of Year 6 is broadly average, and your progress across the school is satisfactory.

We have also asked your school to make some further improvements.

- Make sure that all of you, particularly the boys, do better especially in mathematics. We have suggested that more of the lessons should be good or better. As part of this, we have asked the school to make sure that you are all given suitably challenging work.
- Help you to understand more about what you can do to improve your writing and mathematics by making sure that teachers' marking tells you the next steps in your learning and setting you targets so that you know what to do to reach a higher level.

- Improve attendance at your school, so that it is at least average, and reduce the numbers of you who are late for school.

You can help too by working hard and by coming to school regularly and on time. We wish you success in the future.



Yours sincerely



Chris Grove
Lead Inspector

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