

Ridge View School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	119050
Local Authority	Kent
Inspection number	379714
Inspection dates	23–24 November 2011
Reporting inspector	James Bowden

Type of school	Special
School category	Community special
Age range of pupils	2–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	90
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	10
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Anna Pritchard
Headteacher	Jacqui Tovey
Date of previous school inspection	12–13 March 2009
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Age group	2–19
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 14 lessons, seeing 12 teachers, one senior teaching assistant and one teaching assistant. Meetings were held with the headteacher, the senior management and senior leadership teams and others with posts of responsibility. In addition, meetings were held with the Chair of the Governing Body. Inspectors observed the school's work, and looked at development plans, curriculum planning, school policies, the school's tracking data showing pupils' progress, teachers' lesson plans and samples of pupils' work. They met formally with a small group of older pupils, attended an assembly and observed pupils arriving and leaving at the end of the school day. The lead inspector analysed questionnaires from 33 parents and carers, 30 pupils and 29 staff.

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

- The school's track record of sustaining and improving pupils' achievement at the end of Key Stage 4 and at the end of the sixth form.
- Whether teaching is sufficiently challenging for pupils, enabling all groups to learn effectively and make the best progress possible.
- The effectiveness of leadership at all levels in moving the school onwards and upwards.

Information about the school

Ridge View School provides for pupils with profound, multiple, and severe learning difficulties and autistic spectrum disorders. Over a half has autistic spectrum disorders as a primary need. In addition, many have a range of complex needs including sensory impairment, hearing impairment, physical impairment and delayed cognitive development. All except for six children in the Oakridge Assessment nursery have a statement of special educational needs and a high proportion use alternative or augmentative methods of communication. Apart from attending Ridge View, nursery children enter a variety of other special schools, specialist mainstream schools and mainstream provisions.

Almost all pupils are White British. Boys outnumber girls by two to one. Four pupils are looked after by their local authorities and the proportion known to be eligible for free school meals is above the national average.

The school has gained Healthy Schools status among a number of other 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

The school provides a good quality of education for its pupils. It meets its core aim of developing the individual, ensuring pupils stay safe and healthy and are taught how to make choices and influence decisions about them and their lives while at school and into their futures. The school has significant strengths which underpin pupils' well-being and learning. Outstanding care, guidance and support for pupils enables them to make excellent progress in aspects of their personal development and prepares them well for the next stage of their lives after the sixth form. Excellent partnerships and multi-agency work across the school are also highly effective in contributing to pupils' education. Staff help each pupil, including the most vulnerable and those identified as having complex needs, in very specific ways and ensure all are looked after in a safe, healthy and caring environment. Pupils' responses to the pre-inspection questionnaire show most have positive views about the education they receive and how well they are cared for. The school works highly effectively in forging close links with parents and carers. Consequently, the very large majority are appreciative of almost all aspects of the school's work. One succinctly summed up the typical view noting, 'I am very happy with the school.'

The Early Years Foundation Stage gives children a good start. Pupils go on to achieve well up to the end of the sixth form. School data show pupils' academic progress across the school is improving steadily over time in relation to their starting points. There are no significant differences between the achievement of different groups of pupils, including boys or girls, those known to be entitled to free school meals and those whose circumstances make them most vulnerable. Progress is good in lessons because staff know their pupils well and effective planning ensures the needs of pupils are catered for. Teaching is good and there is some outstanding practice. On occasion, though, not all groups of pupils are challenged consistently to do their best. The school's teaching and learning 'toolkit' has led to an improving proportion of good or better teaching across the school. The school's good curriculum and its focus on providing personalised learning pathways prepare pupils well for the next stage of their education.

The headteacher and her senior management team have a clear sense of direction and purpose for the school. At the forefront of this is their focus on continuing improvement, including raising the quality of teaching and learning even further. Staff support the school's ethos and have the best interests of pupils at heart, ensuring pupils are safe. Curriculum content and a broad range of enrichment activities support the school's good promotion of community cohesion, particularly

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within the school itself and the local community. However, the full impact of the school's 14 to 19 curriculum has yet to be realised. School self-evaluation is accurate and supports well strategic planning in order to move the school onwards and upwards. Areas for improvement identified at the previous inspection have been addressed effectively. Taking all of this into account, the school's current capacity for sustained improvement is good.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching to that of the best practice by ensuring all groups of pupils are challenged consistently to do their best.

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

In lessons, individual pupils and different groups, regardless of their special educational needs and/or disabilities or their backgrounds, consolidate and build on previous learning and make good progress in new learning. This, along with the individual targets set by teachers, supports the good progress they make overall. They benefit greatly from focused individual attention from all adults in the room. In a Years 10 to 14 lesson, pupils with complex special needs made impressive progress in recognising and responding to a range of stimuli, including touching and feeling a range of African percussion instruments and auditory stimuli. In a personal, social and health education (PSHE) lesson, pupils were absorbed in watching a video clip about bullying and in the teacher-led discussion all contributed effectively, either orally or by signing.

In a meeting with the lead inspector, pupils said the school is an exceptionally safe place to learn, that behaviour was good and that they were confident the school would deal effectively with any issues they had, although a small minority were critical of the school in their questionnaire responses. Pupils' personal development is underpinned by strong staff and pupil relationships. Learning was not interrupted by any disruptive behaviour during the inspection, although there were occasions when pupils became frustrated. Pupils respond well to the clear and consistent routines used by staff in managing behaviour in lessons and throughout the school, including in the dining area at lunchtimes where there was a pleasant sociable atmosphere. The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles has been recognised by the award of Healthy Schools status. In addition, pupils enjoy the comprehensive range of physical activities provided. Pupils' views are expressed through both the school council and in the structured 'chit chat' group sessions led by staff. Pupils contribute in many ways to the local community through their enterprise activities. In terms of their personal development, pupils' preparation for the future is very strong.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning**2**

Taking into account:

*

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Pupils' attainment ¹	2
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
The extent to which pupils feel safe	1
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	1
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	2
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1

How effective is the provision?

Teachers and support staff work effectively together and know the needs of pupils well. Planning is supported by careful and ongoing assessment of their capabilities. On occasions, though, the work is not always pitched high enough for the less- or more-able pupils. Information and communication technologies are used effectively to support teaching and enliven learning. Sensitive interventions help pupils stay on task and make sure their needs are met. This was particularly evident in a food technology lesson where staff were particularly adept at ensuring pupils stayed on task by both oral and signing instructions, as well as encouraging independence. Learning intentions are made clear at the start of lessons, which ensures pupils are aware of what is expected of them. However, at the end of lessons, there is not always sufficient involvement of pupils in assessing what they have learned. Notwithstanding this, praise is always given appropriately.

As well as reflecting the National Curriculum, the school has added further breadth to the curriculum by incorporating a range of other accredited courses for Key Stage 4 pupils. The PSHE curriculum contributes well to pupils' personal development and attributes. This, along with a broad range enrichment and extra-curricular activities, including themed religious education days, contributes particularly well to their excellent spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Pupils' communication skills and language development are provided for effectively within the curriculum.

Pupils' health and well-being are at the forefront of the school's excellent ethos of valuing the uniqueness of every pupil and the contribution each pupil has to make to the world. Staff work hard to ensure this and have the added and valuable support of a broad range of other specialist professionals. Parents and carers are also

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

*In some special schools inspectors do not make a judgement about attainment in relation to expectations of the pupils' age.

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supported in many and very effective ways. A carefully managed and executed programme of reviews is effective in supporting pupils on entry to the school, throughout their time there and when they leave. Above average attendance is a result of the school's effective procedures for reducing absence, particularly unauthorised absences. Those pupils who are absent because of medical needs receive appropriate support from the school.

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	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

The drive and vision of the headteacher, her senior management and restructured senior leadership team have resulted in a sharp focus on the monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning, as well as all other areas. As a result, this has sustained strengths identified at the previous inspection as well as identifying further areas for improvement. The governing body is effective in holding the school to account and working with it to ensure safeguarding procedures and practices have a high priority, are effective, up to date and reflect current good practice. The school is effective in ensuring all pupils have equality of opportunity by tackling any discrimination and through its strong ethos of inclusion, with no underachievement of any group of pupils. Its good promotion of community cohesion is reflected in pupils' growing knowledge and understanding of people from different backgrounds both locally and further afield. Given the outcomes the school achieves, it is providing good value for money.

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	1
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

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The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Early Years Foundation Stage

Careful and in-depth initial assessments are used particularly well to plan individual programmes for the unique challenges facing each child in the Early Years Foundation Stage. This ensures the needs of individual children are met effectively. Staff regularly record children's progress against their targets and share this with parents and carers, including two-way written conversations through the home–school contact books. Close tracking and monitoring show that the great majority of children, regardless of their background or special educational needs and/or disabilities, make good progress in relation to their starting points. However, progress in developing problem-solving skills in calculation is currently less secure.

Teaching is good, with particular strengths in questioning techniques and praise for good responses. Behaviour management is outstanding. A further strength is the provision for socialising and social development. In a lesson focusing on 'mark making' for children with complex learning needs, a good starter activity engaged the children and there was very effective emphasis on the key words linked to sensory experiences. However, in a lesson focusing on child-initiated play, the work planned for the more-able children lacked sufficient challenge. The good curriculum ensures children are prepared well for the next stage of their learning at the school. High levels of care and support for the individual child, including for their medical needs where appropriate, and a sharp focus on safe practice underpin the all-round good progress children make. The head of the Early Years Foundation Stage has continued to build on the strengths identified at the previous inspection and self-evaluation and planning ensure there is an ongoing focus on achieving the best outcomes possible for each child.

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

Sixth form

Students are very positive about their experiences and enjoy the increased range of opportunities available to them. They follow individualised programmes of learning matched to their particular needs and aspirations and take a range of vocational and accredited courses in partnership with local colleges, as well as functional skills courses at the school. The school's data show that students are making good

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progress in their chosen accredited courses. In addition, they are making excellent progress in developing the independent skills they need to help them take their place in the community, as well as developing their self esteem and self worth. There are no significant discrepancies in the progress made by different groups of students.

Teaching is excellent because teachers know their students well and plan lessons to ensure the work matches their learning needs. This was a particular strength in a mini-enterprise lesson where, working as pairs, students were given different roles and responsibilities as part of their preparations for producing candles and bracelets for the forthcoming Christmas Fayre. At the end, all were involved in assessing the quality of their learning, as well as suggesting what they could do better. Because the curriculum is now tailored exceptionally well to their individual needs and because of the highly effective care, guidance and support they receive, not only from the school but from a broad range of other professionals, students are particularly well prepared for the next stage of their lives. All move on to further education, training or specialist supported care placements. The head of the 14 to 19 provision has continued to build on the strengths identified at the previous inspection.

These are the grades for the sixth form

Overall effectiveness of the sixth form	2
Taking into account:	2
Outcomes for students in the sixth form	2
The quality of provision in the sixth form	2
Leadership and management of the sixth form	2

Views of parents and carers

The proportion of questionnaires returned was broadly in line with the national average for special schools. Of those returned, most parents and carers say their children enjoy school, the school meets their child's particular needs and that they are happy with their children's experience at the school. This inspection findings endorse these views. A few feel that the school does not help their children to have a healthy lifestyle and that it does not prepare their children for the future. Inspectors found that the school is highly effective in helping pupils in both these respects.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Ridge View 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 33 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 90 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	19	58	11	33	1	3	1	3
The school keeps my child safe	14	42	15	45	2	6	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	19	58	10	30	1	3	1	3
My child is making enough progress at this school	17	52	12	36	1	3	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	17	52	14	42	2	6	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	18	55	10	30	3	9	1	3
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	15	45	13	39	5	15	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)	17	52	12	36	1	3	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	17	52	13	39	0	0	1	3
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	12	36	13	39	2	6	3	9
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	18	55	9	27	2	6	1	3
The school is led and managed effectively	14	42	13	39	2	6	1	3
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	16	48	14	42	1	3	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	46	48	6	0
Primary schools	6	47	40	7
Secondary schools	12	39	38	11
Sixth forms	13	42	41	3
Special schools	28	49	19	4
Pupil referral units	14	45	31	10
All schools	10	46	37	7

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 2010 to 31 December 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 2010/11 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.



30 November 2011

Dear Children, Pupils and Students

Inspection of Ridge View School, Tonbridge TN10 4PT

Not so long ago, two of us came to see how well you are getting on. We also wanted to know whether we could suggest anything to make things even better for you. We thoroughly enjoyed our time at the school, meeting some of you as a small group, and individually in lessons and around the school. The great majority who responded to the Ofsted questionnaire said you felt safe at the school and, without exception, felt that adults in the school cared about you. Our findings match your views.

These are some of the good things we found.

- All the staff care for you and make sure you are safe and happy.
- You all make progress in your learning.
- Aspects of your personal development are outstanding.
- Teachers and other adults give you lots of help and support.
- There are so many interesting and enjoyable things for you to do.
- The school works really well with lots of other people, including your parents and carers, to help you.
- The headteacher and her senior staff have plans to make things even better for you.

This is the one thing that we have asked the school to do so that it will improve:

- Make sure the good teaching becomes even better.

You too can all help by continuing to enjoy your learning. Many thanks for letting us see what you were learning in school during our visit.

Yours sincerely

James Bowden
Lead inspector

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