

The Ridgeway School and Sixth Form College

Inverary Road, Wroughton, Swindon, SN4 9DJ

Inspection dates

12–13 September 2012

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected	
	This inspection:	Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- The school is a very friendly and pleasant place to be – students point to this as one of its key strengths. Students feel very safe and well supported by staff.
- Students achieve well, gaining better-than-average GCSE results. Results improved further last year, particularly in mathematics.
- Teaching is typically good and sometimes outstanding. Strengths include the way in which teachers help students to develop a very secure grasp of key subject knowledge and understanding.
- Students are very positive about school and they attend regularly. They typically behave very well and misbehaviour is rare.
- The school is well led and continues to improve. Well-developed systems are in place to check and monitor the school's work. Effective action is taken to improve teaching and raise achievement.
- Leaders observe lessons regularly to identify strengths and weaknesses in teachers' practice. They provide a wide range of training and development opportunities that are closely matched to individual teachers' capabilities and needs.
- The sixth form is good. A range of changes have supported improvements in provision. Attainment in examinations is average and rising.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- There is some variability in the quality of teaching. In particular, not all lessons challenge students fully, particularly the most able.
- Sixth form students make good progress, but their progress is not as rapid as students lower down the school. A-level examination results are not as high as GCSE results.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching and learning in 47 lessons, with a number of briefer visits to other lessons.
- Meetings were held with students, staff and members of the school’s governing body.
- Inspectors observed the school’s work and looked at a wide range of documentation. They considered the 62 responses to the online (Parent View) questionnaire and other questionnaires completed by staff.

Inspection team

Christopher Russell, Lead inspector	Her Majesty’s Inspector
Kate Rick	Additional inspector
Robert Isaac	Additional inspector
Teresa Hill	Additional inspector
Jacqueline Goodall	Additional inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The Ridgeway School and Sixth Form College is a converter academy, established in September 2011 from The Ridgeway School, a maintained school in the control of Swindon local authority. When it was last inspected in 2008, The Ridgeway School was judged to be outstanding overall; achievement, teaching and learning, and behaviour were judged to be good.
- The school is larger than the average-sized secondary school.
- The proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals (for whom the school receives the pupil premium) is below average.
- Relatively few students are from minority ethnic groups and few speak English as an additional language.
- The proportions of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs who are supported at school action, or at school action plus or with a statement of special education needs, are below average. The school has specially resourced provision for students with a hearing impairment. This currently supports four students.
- Most sixth form courses are provided by the school, but a few students attend some of their courses at two other local sixth form providers.
- The school meets the current government floor standards, which set minimum expectations for students' attainment and/or progress.
- The headteacher and other school staff provide support for a number of schools in the local area and further afield.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Eradicate any remaining teaching that is less than good and increase the amount of outstanding teaching, in particular by ensuring that all teachers:
 - take full account of the particular needs of students of different ability, both in their initial planning for the lesson and in their interactions with students during the lesson
 - provide students with sufficient opportunities to work more actively, independently and in groups.
- Implement the plans in place to raise the achievement of sixth form students further so that their examination results exceed national averages.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils **is good**

- Students join the school in Year 7 with above-average starting points. They attain high examination results at the end of Year 11.
- Students who took GCSE examinations in 2011 made good progress from their starting points in Year 7. Lower ability students achieved particularly well. Achievement was particularly strong in English, but not as strong in mathematics.
- There were further improvements in GCSE results in 2012. Mathematics results rose significantly and there was a notable rise in the proportion of students gaining five or more GCSE passes at grades A* to C including English and mathematics.
- Some of the money provided by the pupil premium to support the achievement of students known to be eligible for free school meals was used to provide individual, targeted support for Year 11 students. This supported an improvement in examination results for this group of students last year.
- Students make good progress in the sixth form, but their progress is not as rapid as students lower down the school. Competition for sixth form students in the local area and the school's relatively open-access policy mean that students typically join the sixth form with slightly below average levels of attainment. Examination results are close to the national average and rising.
- Students from the different minority ethnic groups that make up the school's population do well. For example, students from an Indian background who took GCSE examinations in 2011 achieved particularly highly.
- Students identified with special educational needs, including those in the school's specially resourced provision, typically make at least as much progress as other students. They are well supported within and outside of lessons and teachers pay good attention to their particular needs.
- The way in which students are able to speak confidently, articulately and precisely is a particular strength. Students also typically read and write well.

The quality of teaching **is good**

- Teaching across the school is good and there is some outstanding practice. Lessons are typically calm and very purposeful. Teachers' relationships with students are very good and students find their teachers supportive, approachable and very helpful.
- There is, however, some variability; this was seen by inspectors and described by students. Students, however, are clear that teaching has improved and that lessons are typically engaging and interesting.
- Teachers focus sharply on ensuring that all students are able to grasp the key knowledge and understanding in the lesson. However, some do not always take enough account of the needs of students of different ability when they plan and deliver their lessons. This sometimes means that everyone does the same work and that most-able students in particular are not fully challenged by the lesson.
- Highly effective provision in English and good support across a range of subjects help students to secure well-developed basic literacy skills. Provision in mathematics has improved significantly in the past year.
- Students know and understand their targets. While it was difficult for inspectors to make a full evaluation of teachers' marking so early in the term, many students pointed to significant improvements in the frequency and helpfulness of marking.
- Students concentrate well in lessons and are motivated learners. They have well-developed social skills and work well in pairs and groups. At times, however, teachers spend too much time talking to the class, reducing students' opportunities to work more actively, independently or with each other.

- Some teaching is outstanding. In one Year 12 lesson, for example, students made rapid progress in their spoken French. Key to the success of the lesson was the teacher's very high expectations of each student's spoken language and the individual support and challenge that she provided. Her questioning was tenacious, probing and carefully targeted at individuals, ensuring that everyone was kept 'on their toes'.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Students say that they feel very safe and secure in school. This view was echoed by parents' responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View. Students are well cared for and supported. Those who face particular challenges are provided with very effective support.
- The school helps students to have a clear understanding of what constitutes bullying and the different kinds that may occur, such as homophobic or cyber bullying. Students are clear that the school deals effectively with any bullying incidents.
- Students behave very well around the school site, which is an orderly and pleasant environment. Behaviour is generally very well managed. No student has been permanently excluded in recent years and the numbers of fixed-term exclusions have fallen.
- Behaviour in lessons is typically at least good and sometimes outstanding, although students are sometimes a little passive in lessons. Students point to significant improvements in behaviour and say that it is generally very good. They also say that lessons are occasionally disrupted by minor misbehaviour, particularly in lower ability setted classes. Inspectors observed this for themselves in a small number of lessons, but it was not typical.
- Attendance levels are high. The gap between the attendance of students known to be eligible for free school meals and other students was slightly larger than that seen nationally in 2011; it narrowed this year.

The leadership and management are good

- This is a well led school. The headteacher and leadership team are providing strong and clear leadership and the school is in a good position to continue its improvement.
- Well-developed and well-organised systems and processes are in place to enable leaders to monitor and evaluate the school's performance and manage teachers' performance. The specific roles of senior and middle leaders in these processes are very clear.
- Leaders observe lessons frequently to assess quality and identify potential areas for improvement. The inspection team's view of the quality of teaching was similar to, but not quite as positive as, the school's. The quality of documentation written following lesson observation is generally very good, but there is some variability. In some cases, the key things that the teacher needs to do to improve are not identified with sufficient clarity.
- A particular strength is the way in which the school has developed a very wide range of specific training and development opportunities for teachers. This means that they can be directed to, or can select, activities that meet their particular needs very precisely. These opportunities have supported clear improvements in teaching and achievement. They are appreciated by staff, whose morale is high. Teachers new to the profession are very well supported.
- Leaders act tenaciously to correct any weaknesses. They took robust action to deal with relative weaknesses in mathematics provision and achievement. This led to clear improvement and a significant rise in results last year. Recognising that achievement in the sixth form was not as strong as in the main school, leaders acted to secure improvement. Further, well-considered plans are in place to continue this trend.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - the governing body provides valuable support to the school
 - its members have a good understanding of the school's key strengths and weaknesses, and

challenge leaders well.

- As the school is a converter academy, it does not receive support from the local authority. However, leaders have commissioned a range of useful external support, for example to support improvements in mathematics.
- The curriculum meets students' needs well. Older students are positive about the range of courses that are available to them.
- Much good work has been done to improve the school's engagement with parents, for example by extending the opportunities for electronic communication. The parents who responded to the online questionnaire were very positive about the school.
- The school promotes equality well. All groups of students are well served by the school and achievement is tracked to ensure that any gaps between different groups of students can be identified and tackled. Staff have created a safe and friendly environment and any rare incidences of discrimination are dealt with effectively.
- Systems and processes that keep pupils safe meet government requirements well.

What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	137160
Local authority	NA
Inspection number	395693

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

Type of school	Academy converter
School category	Non-maintained
Age range of pupils	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1301
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	240
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	David Wren
Headteacher	Steven Colledge
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
Telephone number	01793 846100
Fax number	01793 815065
Email address	admin@ridgewayschool.com

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