

Ridgewood High School

Park Road West, Wollaston, Stourbridge, DY8 3NQ

Inspection dates

15–16 November 2012

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	Requires improvement	3
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement. It is not good because

- Students do not make sufficient progress, although the current Year 11 are making better progress as a result of the improved courses they are following.
- The quality of teaching is inconsistent, and work for students is not always set at the right level for them. It is sometimes too easy and sometimes too hard.
- Teachers do not always assess students' progress effectively enough during a lesson to enable them to adapt their teaching to address common mistakes or to move students on in their learning.
- Teachers' marking does not always enable students to understand how to improve their work or provide opportunities for them to respond to the advice given.
- The teaching of reading requires improvement. Teachers in different subjects do not focus sufficiently on developing literacy or improving students' spelling, punctuation and grammar.
- School staff do not check effectively the progress of disabled students and those with special educational needs. School leaders do not know well enough how these students are doing, or the impact of the support provided to these students.

The school has the following strengths

- Students behave well in lessons and are keen to do well. They say that they feel safe and are confident that adults will take care of them and support them.
- Students' attendance has significantly improved and is continuing to do so. Exclusion rates have fallen, as a result of the good care and support provided to students.
- School leaders, including governors, have ensured that teaching has improved since the previous inspection, although inconsistencies in the quality of teaching remain.
- The new courses that students follow are well matched to their individual needs. The wide range of opportunities for them to follow their interests outside school is outstanding.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 42 lessons, six of which were joint observations with the senior leaders. In addition, inspectors made a number of short visits to lessons.
- Meetings were held with students, a representative of the governing body, and staff, including middle managers. Telephone conversations took place with a representative of the local authority and with a parent.
- The inspectors observed the school's work and looked at: policies, self-evaluation and development planning, monitoring records, data related to the tracking of students' progress, safeguarding documents, and samples of students' work.
- The views of 34 parents and carers who responded to the online questionnaire (Parent View) were taken into account, along with 34 responses to the staff questionnaire

Inspection team

Mary Davis, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Richard Boswell	Additional Inspector
Mary Le Breuilly	Additional Inspector
Charlotte Evers	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is smaller than the average-sized secondary school.
- The proportion of disabled students and those who have special educational needs supported through school action is above average, as is the proportion supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs.
- The proportion of students from minority ethnic heritages is below the national average; almost none speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of students known to be eligible for the pupil premium, which provides additional funding for some students including those in local authority care and those known to be eligible for free school meals, is below the national average. Over half those currently eligible are also on the special educational needs register.
- The school meets the government's floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.
- The school is a specialist STEM college (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) and is part of the Stourbridge Education Trust, a partnership of local schools.
- Thirty-one students in Key Stage 4 follow alternative courses at King Edward's College sixth form, Stourbridge College, Halesowen College and EDS Construction.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that teaching is consistently good or outstanding, by:
 - planning tasks and providing resources and support that meet all students' individual needs, making sure work is hard enough for more-able students and not too hard for the less-able
 - promoting students' independent learning by always providing clear written feedback on their work and opportunities for them to respond, so that they know how to reach and exceed their targets
 - assessing students' learning during lessons to ensure that additional support is provided where students do not understand or to provide students who find the task easy with a new challenge.
- Quickly identify low-attaining readers in order to help them improve their skills and make sure that teachers in all subjects promote literacy and check students' spelling, punctuation and grammar.
- Ensure that the academic monitoring of disabled students and those with special educational needs is of the same high standard as that of their pastoral care, so that leaders are better able to check how well they are doing.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Achievement is not yet good because students' progress has not been rapid enough over the past three years. Although this is now improving strongly, the increased rates of progress now seen have not been maintained over a sustained period.
- Students enter the school with above average levels in the basic skills of reading, writing, communication and mathematics. The schools' assessments indicate that the current Year 11 are on track to reach above average standards by the end of the year, and that an increasing proportion are now making and exceeding expected rates of progress. This is because this year group are following a range of courses that better meet their individual needs. The quality of teaching, particularly in Key Stage 4, has improved.
- Although the school is now taking action to accelerate reading, including providing appropriate training for teaching assistants, this support is not yet fully established and weaker readers are not identified or supported quickly enough on entry to Year 7. Although most teachers focus well on the technical language required for their subjects, not all of them check spelling, punctuation and grammar when they mark students' work. The library is popular and well used and students of all ages show enjoyment in reading.
- The school provides well for those students eligible for the pupil premium. The school's tracking of progress indicates that the gap between their attainment and that of their peers is closing rapidly and that progress in mathematics has accelerated for these students over the past year.
- The small proportion of students taking courses at other providers achieve qualifications in English, mathematics and science in addition to undertaking appropriate work placements and a range of vocational courses. Their achievements on these courses have successfully led to further training or to employment.
- Disabled students and those who have special educational needs, and the very few who speak English as an additional language, are enabled to make equal progress to their peers through the individual support, care and encouragement provided for them. However in some lessons, particularly where they are taught as lower attaining groups, the work is too hard for them.
- The school's specialism in science has enabled a good range of support to be provided for local primary schools. A wide range of science-based courses are offered at Ridgewood, including a focus on ecology. However, student achievement in science requires improvement. Teaching in this subject requires improvement.
- Students display good attitudes towards their learning and are usually attentive and keen to do well. They enjoy the opportunities provided to develop independence. For example, in an outstanding French lesson, students knew how they could answer well, enabling them to target their answers appropriately. As a result of a lively task where they corrected statements in French, they were able to practise how to check their answers carefully to ensure that they did not let tiny mistakes in grammar result in losing marks.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- The quality of teaching requires improvement because it is not consistently good or outstanding. School leaders' rigorous checks show that teaching is typically improving strongly with an

increasing proportion of outstanding practice across the school. Lesson observations during the inspection confirmed the school leaders' judgements. Where teaching requires improvement, teachers are not using assessment information well enough to plan lessons that meet students' individual needs. This results in higher-attaining students being insufficiently challenged so that they find the work too easy or lower-attaining students finding the work too difficult. Consequently the pace of learning is not quick enough.

- In the best lessons, tasks are stimulating and engage the enthusiasm of students so that they become engrossed. Resources are well prepared and enable students to work independently. For example, in a music lesson, students worked in pairs to compose an overture for the 'Shrek' story, having first examined and planned the key musical elements that would best convey their chosen characters.
- Students say that teachers provide helpful verbal feedback so that they know how to improve and develop their work. Some inconsistency, however, in the quality of teachers' marking means that students do not always have a clear idea of how to achieve their targets, or have the opportunity to respond to the advice given.
- Most teachers use questioning well to find out how well students understand and to stimulate their thinking. However, a minority of them do not act quickly enough to provide help for students who do not understand or provide harder work for those who finish a task quickly.
- Most teachers provide opportunities for students to work in pairs or small groups to enable them to develop teamwork and independence. Students work well together, and frequently support each other. They told inspectors how much they enjoy assessing each other's work because this provides instant feedback on how to do better.

The behaviour and safety of pupils

are good

- Staff, parents and carers are positive about the standards of behaviour in lessons. Students are generally polite and courteous, both to one another and to visitors. They told inspectors that the school keeps them safe and that there are always adults who will listen to them and support them.
- Students' behaviour is not outstanding because a few students sometimes lose concentration in lessons and their behaviour around the school is occasionally boisterous.
- Students show positive attitudes in lessons and this has a strong impact on their learning. There are some students who require guidance to behave appropriately, but they understand and respond quickly to sanctions. They say that teachers are fair in how they manage behaviour. Relationships between staff and students are warm and supportive, and students are keen to contribute, even when teaching is less than good.
- Key Stage 4 students frequently support younger ones both in their learning and in ensuring their good behaviour and maintaining expected standards of uniform. Those appointed as prefects take their role very seriously and are aware of the need to be role models. The mixed-age tutor groups are very effective in enabling students of different year groups to work together. The school council (Student Voice) is outstanding in its work in representing students' views and encouraging high standards of behaviour.
- School leaders manage behaviour very effectively and use information from their detailed

analysis of data to ensure that appropriate intervention and support is provided for those students who need it. The rate of fixed-term exclusions have been high, but leaders have introduced new systems, including the use of an isolation room, which are monitored regularly and have significantly reduced this rate.

- Students told inspectors that those from different ethnic backgrounds get on well together and show respect for beliefs different to their own. A well-established international partnership with Gambia has enabled students to visit, raise funds and to be actively involved in improving the lives of those they support. Students told inspectors how this experience had been inspirational and life changing. Although this makes an outstanding contribution to students' spiritual, social and cultural development, some teachers miss the opportunity to enable students to reflect on moral issues in lessons.
- Students know about different forms of bullying and say that there are few instances of racist or cyber-bullying. There is less understanding of homophobic bullying but adults take action quickly when they are made aware of any name-calling.
- Attendance rates have greatly improved over recent years and are now above average. Persistent absence has also reduced over the past year and punctuality to school continues to improve.

The leadership and management

are good

- The headteacher has made raising the quality of teaching a priority. Leaders, including governors, check on the quality of teaching thoroughly and provide good support and training to improve it. Pay rises and promotion are used effectively to reward good performance. As a result, the quality of teaching has improved in most subjects since the previous inspection. There is more outstanding teaching, although the impact of this has not yet been seen in terms of examination outcomes. Some inconsistency remains and senior leaders are working to involve subject leaders more closely in checking on teaching within their areas.
- The combination of courses offered is flexible to meet the needs of students of all abilities and to enable them to reach their potential. The three-year programme of GCSE courses begins in Year 9. Students are then given the opportunity to improve their results in English and mathematics in Year 11 after intensive support if they have not met their targets. This enables students to supplement or improve on qualifications already taken or to broaden their experience through, for example, the Duke of Edinburgh Award scheme.
- Effective alternative courses enable the most gifted and talented students to begin A level courses and those who require extra support to follow courses combining work placements with qualifications. This has had a significant impact on keeping students at risk of exclusion engaged in their education and in 2012, resulted in all students being in education, employment or training after finishing compulsory education at the school. The school checks closely on the attendance and progress of students on off-site courses and, by combining these courses with individual support in school, ensure that they are well supported.
- Pupil premium funding is used effectively to provide a wide variety of specialist and individual support, including support for behaviour and raising attendance levels. This has resulted in the raising of achievement of this group of students. The impact of this funding is checked and analysed by leaders, including the governors.

- Although school leaders ensure that disabled students and those with special educational needs are very well cared for and those with behavioural difficulties are well supported, their academic progress is not sufficiently monitored or analysed. This makes it difficult for leaders to judge the success of the steps taken to promote their progress.
- The school works to engage parents and carers in their child's education and provides effective support for those families facing challenging circumstances. Parents say they value school's support for disabled students and those with special educational needs.
- The local authority provides appropriate support for the school's leaders and promotes the Stourbridge Education Trust partnership which provides mutual support and opportunities for training.

■ **The governance of the school:**

- Governors involve themselves thoroughly in the life of the school. They are very well-informed and both support the school's leaders and hold them to account effectively. They are strong in terms of promoting high quality teaching and express their pride in the staff and students. They keep a close check on what is happening and seek training and external support appropriately. They know the strengths and weaknesses of the school and are involved in strategic planning. They are aware of the performance of different groups of students and of how effectively the pupil premium funding is being allocated, fully checking on the difference the funding is making for disadvantaged students. They ensure that all safeguarding procedures meet statutory requirements and that the policies and procedures for improving behaviour and safety have been effective.

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	103866
Local authority	Dudley
Inspection number	400667

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Foundation
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	839
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	John Hodt
Headteacher	Clive Nutting
Date of previous school inspection	10 May 2010
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