

# Ridgewood Community High School

Eastern Avenue, Burnley, Lancashire, BB10 2AT

**Inspection dates** 27–28 February 2013

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	<b>Good</b>	<b>2</b>
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Outstanding	1
Leadership and management		Good	2

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a good school.

- The school's warm, friendly atmosphere and its outstanding levels of care help students to make good and better progress.
- Good teaching and well-planned lessons have ensured that progress in reading, writing and mathematics is good. It is better in English than in mathematics.
- Staff know students very well and have great skill in helping them to express their feelings and make their wishes known. Students make excellent gains in their communication skills as a result.
- Students are happy and feel secure in school. Parents agree. Behaviour and safety are outstanding.
- The school has strong leadership and management. The recently extended senior team of experienced and new staff are ambitious for the school and have complementary skills.
- Revised systems to check teaching and students' progress are developing well, and progress in literacy is improving as a result.
- Parents are highly supportive of the school and value the out-of-school clubs and residential experiences offered to their children.
- The school's post-16 provision is good. A more adult focus on the work for older students has resulted in extended college links, work experiences and range of new courses.

### It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Not all teaching makes the best use of lesson plans, students' targets or opportunities for students to develop greater independence.
- Systems to check students' progress in mathematics are not as strong as in English, and extra help in class is not sufficiently reviewed to see if it has been successful.

## Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed 14 lessons and two shorter periods of teaching. They saw almost all of the school’s teachers and two higher level teaching assistants, and all classes were seen. Two lessons were jointly observed with the school’s headteacher.
- Students led a tour of the school; inspectors also listened to them read and discussed their work with them.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, school staff and senior leaders, the school council the school’s senior nurse, members of the governing body and the school’s independent improvement partner.
- A telephone call was made to a representative from the local authority.
- Informal discussions were also held with staff and students.
- Information from the school’s most recent parental questionnaire was taken into account, together with a letter submitted to the inspectors and a brief discussion with a parent visiting the school. Insufficient responses were available on the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) to be able to access them.
- Staff views were gathered from discussions and from the staff questionnaire.
- The inspectors looked at information about students’ progress, teaching, planning and monitoring documentation. The school’s documents on safeguarding were reviewed, together with records of attendance and students’ behaviour.

## Inspection team

Linda Clare, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Nell Banfield

Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- Ridgewood provides for students with a very wide range of special educational needs. All students attending the school have a statement of special educational needs indicating profound and complex needs, severe and moderate learning difficulties or autistic spectrum conditions.
- Many students have additional physical or medical needs.
- Students can join the school at any age but most enter at the usual transfer age of 11.
- Almost half of the school's students are known to be eligible for the pupil premium (additional funding); this is significantly above the national average.
- There are almost equal numbers of boys and girls in the school and most students are of White British heritage.
- Ridgewood is co-located with Sir John Thursby Community College, a secondary mainstream school. A small number of students experience activities in the co-located school.
- The number of students in the school's provision for those over the age of 16, known as Further Education (FE) in the school, has risen since the previous inspection.
- The school has achieved Healthy School status, the Leading Parent Partnership Award, Investors in People and was awarded Sports School of the Year in 2011 for Lancashire.

### What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Further improve teaching and learning to increase the rate of students' progress by:
  - ensuring that teachers use activities they have planned to provide more-able students with activities that stretch their abilities in all lessons
  - allowing students the opportunity to try by themselves before support is provided, to help them to gain even more independence
  - making more consistent use of individual target cards in lessons so that students better understand how much they have learned.
- Improve and develop the way in which students' progress is checked by:
  - making the way the school checks progress in mathematics as efficient as it is in English
  - ensuring any extra help given is evaluated to make sure that it is making a difference.

## Inspection judgements

### The achievement of pupils

is good

- Students achieve well. They enter the school with low and very low levels of ability as a result of their complex learning and additional needs. For a small number of students, progress is affected by late entry to the school or as a result of extended absence due to serious medical conditions.
- Progress in reading is generally good and students enjoy reading activities in all lessons. Although good progress is made in English and mathematics, as a result of a recent focus, better gains are made in English. A new programme to boost mathematics has been put in place.
- Good attention is paid to ensuring students have equal access to learning. Signing is used to help those with fewer verbal skills, and technology, pictures and symbols help students of all abilities to make themselves understood. As a result, students' communication skills develop exceptionally well.
- More-able students learn how to build words by blending letters and sounds. They develop good handwriting and enjoy practical work. In a design and technology lesson, students were engrossed in their construction of pencil boxes, sawing and measuring with great precision and taking excellent account of safety.
- Real-life learning experiences are closely woven into all lessons. Students learn effectively through role play and in one lesson acted out how to catch a bus, pay their fares and visit shops to use money. These skills are reinforced well in actual shopping and travel experiences.
- Students love to try new experiences and do so with energy and enjoyment, clearly observed in the Chinese dance and in archery sessions. Trusting relationships with staff help them learn to work with others, show respect and take turns. A wide range of community links develop students' social, spiritual and cultural learning.
- The pupil premium is providing support for funded students to improve their attendance and develop self-esteem as learners. This is contributing to the good rise in students' attendance and in levels of literacy across the school. There is very little variation in the overall progress of girls and boys, those from ethnic minority groups or those in receipt of free school meals or allocated pupil funding.
- Students' personal and social skills develop extremely well as they go through school. Literacy skills develop well. Their 'pathways' to qualifications and courses are tailored to individual needs and interests. Entry level awards are increasing and the school has made good use of the adjoining high school to arrange individual links for GCSE subjects, and for small groups, for example in ceramics.
- Students who stay after the age of 16, mostly those continuing to develop life skills, make good progress. Their courses acknowledge their developing maturity in a more collegiate setting. Careers support and good improvements in social, literacy and numeracy skills ensure students are well prepared for the future.

### The quality of teaching

is good

- Teaching is generally good. It was outstanding in a small number of lessons observed.
- In most lessons, teachers successfully plan work to cover a wide range of students' needs and abilities. They know how to set work at the right levels to challenge students. Occasionally, in lessons observed, more-able students were not given planned extension work and had to wait for others to finish, which restricted any further progress.
- The teaching of reading is well structured and uses a letter-sound system. Good training has increased staff expertise and this is improving students' reading and writing skills. Mathematics is generally taught well and technology is used effectively as students use switches and computer programmes to help them learn.

- Teachers use questions skilfully to discover how much students have learned and how much they understand during the lesson. Sometimes staff are too helpful and jump in with answers or guidance before students have had enough time to think about what to say or what to write. This limits how much students learn to do by themselves and how much they learn through trial and error.
- Teaching support plays a valuable and valued part in improving students' progress. Teachers and teaching assistants work in very well coordinated class teams. The flexibility of each team means that in some classes individual support, partner work and small group learning can take place at the same time. In a lesson on metric measure, this was used very successfully to allow different groups to explore weight, distance and location.
- Students' targets are clearly written on colourful cards with student photographs. In some lessons, students showed pride in their learning as, with staff, they used the cards to discuss how well a target had been achieved. This does not yet happen in all lessons - which misses opportunities to reinforce how well students are doing and to encourage them to take more part in their learning.
- Teaching in the Further Education department is good and delivered with great sensitivity to the age and maturity levels of the students.

### **The behaviour and safety of pupils** are outstanding

- Students say they really enjoy school. They are consistently well mannered, polite and eager to show off their school to visitors. Parents, staff and students agree that the nurturing and supportive atmosphere of the school contributes significantly to the high levels of excellent behaviour seen.
- In lessons students try very hard, want to please and are very keen to succeed in their work. They respond very well to the school's reward systems and enjoy the attention and praise they receive for their achievements. The school council is active and helps school leaders to make decisions, most recently to plan social gatherings, such as the new Year 11 'Prom' event.
- Students' behaviour is managed very effectively by staff and rarely disrupts the lesson for other students. More-able students learn to self-manage any frustration, occasionally using the 'blue chairs' dotted about school to calm themselves, if necessary, before resuming work or play.
- Students say that bullying of any kind is not an issue and express great confidence that any minor disagreements will be sorted out promptly by staff. The very comprehensive personal, social and health development programme helps them to understand how to keep safe at levels appropriate to their ability as they go through school.
- Risks to students' safety are particularly well assessed and individual plans of varying complexity ensure students' personal safety, care and well-being both in school and when off-site. These extend to very detailed and personalised wheelchair plans.
- Excellent working relationships and joint training with health and therapy staff ensure that medical, physical and personal care needs are met sensitively and discreetly to afford students maximum dignity.
- Attendance has risen considerably since the last inspection and now compares favourably nationally and with other similar schools. Students attend school regularly unless they are not well enough to do so.

### **The leadership and management** are good

- The headteacher, ably supported by the deputy headteacher, continues to provide strong and purposeful direction. Over the last year, new middle managers to lead English, mathematics and for each key stage have started to introduce new ideas, which have invigorated school improvement.
- This rejuvenated team has thoroughly re-evaluated what the school needs to do. Plans for the

future build efficiently on a generally good evaluation of how the school has performed and clearly show areas for development. Staff attend relevant training and share the school's priorities, expectations and ambitions. Morale is high.

- Teaching is being checked more thoroughly. Teachers' targets are well linked to the school's plans for improvement and to pay progression, and they focus appropriately on raising students' achievement. As a result, students' progress in literacy has already improved.
- The school is developing its systems to check how much progress students make. The system to check progress in English is more advanced than for mathematics, as a result of a recent two year school-wide focus. The new coordinator is leading this year's focus on improving mathematics.
- Senior managers also check regularly to see where and when students may need additional support. This is quickly provided but the school does not yet measure how beneficial the extra support has been or how it may be improved.
- The curriculum is full of new experiences for students and is constantly developing. Excellent partnerships are in place with parents and the school works hard to involve families. Breakfast club, Saturday bike club, and holiday sessions extend home-school links very well. The school tackles discrimination effectively and its work to ensure equality of opportunity makes all feel valued members of its community.
- The management of the sixth form is now good and under the experienced leadership this growing provision is developing effectively with an increased number of dedicated staff. Community and enterprise schemes have provided new and engaging ways to enhance life skills, literacy and numeracy.
- There is a good working partnership between the school and the local authority who provide a light-touch level of support. The school's arrangements for safeguarding students meet statutory requirements.
- **The governance of the school:**
  - Recent changes in the school's governing body have resulted in a strengthening of the range of skills they have to draw upon. Governors are kept informed through regular visits to school and they hold senior managers to account well on teaching and performance of staff. They understand improvement planning and know the school's strengths and areas in need of development. Governors ensure the efficient management of financial resources, including the use of the pupil premium funding, which is to be fully evaluated at the end of the school year. Governors share senior managers' ambition for students to achieve as well as they can and for them to enjoy the best possible provision.

## 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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	135013
<b>Local authority</b>	Lancashire
<b>Inspection number</b>	402664

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Special
<b>School category</b>	Community special
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–19
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Gender of pupils in the sixth form</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	132
<b>Of which, number on roll in sixth form</b>	41
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Jeffrey Kay
<b>Headteacher</b>	Fran Entwistle
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	14 October 2009
<b>Telephone number</b>	01282 682316
<b>Fax number</b>	01282 682317
<b>Email address</b>	office@ridgewood.lancs.sch.uk



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