

Ridgeway High School

Noctorum Avenue, Noctorum, Prenton, Merseyside, CH43 9EB

Inspection dates 3–4 July 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Outstanding	1
	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.

- Students receive a very good all-round education because achievement across the range of subjects is consistently at least good.
- Given students' starting points, the proportion of students achieving five or more GCSE passes at grades A* to C, including English and mathematics, is outstanding.
- Teachers' passion and enthusiasm for their subjects motivate students. Students enjoy opportunities to express their opinions when working together in pairs and groups.
- Disabled students and those with special educational needs make outstanding overall progress.
- Behaviour and safety are good because teachers help students develop the confidence they need to succeed.
- There are examples of outstanding teaching across a number of subjects, including: English, mathematics, science, design technology and physical education.
- The new headteacher has made an excellent start. Senior leaders have high ambition for students and are relentless in their drive to ensure that standards and the quality of teaching continue to rise through the rigorous tracking of students' progress.
- Outstanding teaching in religious education and an outstanding music curriculum support students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- Governors provide senior leaders with a good balance of challenge and support.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Students' progress in English and science is not as outstanding as it is in mathematics.
- Teaching across the range of subjects does not yet help students to develop their skills in reading and writing as well as they could.
- Marking does not always clearly identify how students can improve their work.
- Attendance requires improvement.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 36 lessons, six of which were observed jointly with senior leaders.
- Inspectors held meetings with senior and middle leaders, groups of students, the Chair and members of the Governing Body, and spoke with an external consultant who supports the school's work.
- Inspectors considered the views of the 23 parents who responded to Parent View, the online questionnaire. They analysed the results of the staff questionnaire to which 58 replies were received.
- Inspectors analysed the 2012 examination results and the published results for previous years. They looked at the school's data on students' progress, lesson plans, minutes of meetings and records relating to behaviour, safety and attendance. They also reviewed the school's checks on how well it is doing and school improvement plans.

Inspection team

Lisa Fraser, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Stephen Rowland

Additional Inspector

Christine Addison

Additional Inspector

Clive Hurren

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is smaller than average.
- The majority of students are from White British backgrounds; Pakistani, African, Indian and students from any other White background are the largest other minority ethnic groups.
- The proportion of students who speak English as an additional language is below average.
- The proportion of students eligible for the pupil premium, which provides additional funding for those pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals, children from service families and those children that are looked after, is above average.
- The proportion of disabled students and those who have special educational needs supported at school action is above average. The proportion of students supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is above average.
- The school has specialisms in business and enterprise and languages.
- At the time of inspection the new headteacher had been in post for three weeks; he was appointed acting headteacher in September 2012.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.
- Three Year 10 students attend off-site alternative provision for part of their learning at Progress Sports Ltd.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching, particularly in English and science, so that it is consistently outstanding, by ensuring all teachers:
 - mark work regularly and in sufficient detail so that students know exactly what they need to do to achieve a better grade
 - help students to develop their reading and writing skills across the range of subjects
 - have opportunities to share their good practice so that no teaching requires improvement.
- Improve attendance rates by:
 - implementing plans to improve attendance and refining systems to support students' good attendance where necessary.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

is good

- Students enter the school with skills in reading, writing and mathematics which are significantly below national averages. Students receive a high-quality all-round education because the proportion of students achieving five or more GCSE passes at grades A* to C, including English and mathematics, is outstanding. All students achieve five good GCSE passes.
- Early-entry in GCSE mathematics is used successfully because an above average proportion of students make expected progress or better although the proportion of students attaining the top grades is still below average. In English, students do not achieve as well because students' progress is slightly below that expected nationally. Senior leaders have plans in place to help students develop their skills in reading and writing across all subjects.
- Disabled students and those with special educational needs make outstanding overall progress because they are well supported by good-quality sessions which help to reinforce their understanding.
- Initiatives such as smaller group teaching have been made possible through additional funding which is closing the attainment gap between students known to be eligible for the pupil premium and others. Students are now only a third of a grade behind their peers in English and a tiny fraction behind in mathematics. Senior leaders have ensured that extra funding is used more effectively than before, supported by a research project which the school has undertaken with Edge Hill University, to ensure students get maximum benefit.
- The achievement of small numbers of students on vocational GCSE courses is good, reflecting well upon the school's business and enterprise specialism. In recognition of the school's languages specialism, all students now study a language at Key Stage 4 although their progress has been variable.
- Year 7 catch-up funding is being used effectively to support improvements in students' reading and spelling ages. As a result, almost 90% of students in the target group have made a year's gain in their reading age in just six months.
- Achievement in science is too variable. Large numbers of students who study core science are not making the progress they should because the quality of teaching is not consistently good.
- The attendance and progress of the small number of students who attend alternative provision away from the school are monitored carefully to make sure they are making good progress.

The quality of teaching

is good

- The quality of teaching is good overall with some examples of outstanding teaching across a number of subjects.
- Students develop a range of communication skills because they are regularly given opportunities to work together in pairs and groups. Students enjoy sharing their ideas and are good at explaining and justifying their opinions. For example, students in Year 10 science made outstanding progress in their understanding of the properties of alkali metals by working together to explore and solve problems.
- In the best lessons teachers' passion and enthusiasm for their subjects engage and motivate students. For instance, inspirational teaching in a design technology lesson encouraged Year 7 students to have the confidence to aim high and make outstanding progress in designing a key ring. Achievement in a Year 8 physical education lesson on circuit training was outstanding because of excellent relationships and equally high levels of challenge.
- Expert use of questioning by teachers helps students improve their understanding. For example, the teacher's skilled questioning in a Year 10 English lesson on *'Lord of the Flies'* helped students to make outstanding progress and recognise that they have the ability to work things out for themselves. Homework tasks support students' learning in school.

- Disabled students and those with special educational needs are supported in lessons effectively by the small number of teaching assistants.
- Students do not yet have much opportunity to develop their literacy skills across the range of subjects.
- In a minority of lessons which require improvement marking is not always sufficiently detailed because students do not always receive enough advice on what they need to do to improve their work.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Students have positive attitudes to learning. Around the school, students behave in a responsible manner so that break and lunchtimes are orderly.
- Students get on well with each other and with staff. They demonstrate high levels of cooperation when working together in pairs and groups.
- In assemblies school leaders develop students' understanding of the harmful effects of harassment, including that based on racism and homophobia. Students report that as a result, bullying is not an issue.
- In discussion, students spoke enthusiastically about 'Learning for life' lessons which contribute to students' understanding of how to keep themselves safe, including when using the internet.
- A very small minority of parents expressed concerns about bullying through Parent View. Inspectors looked into these concerns carefully and concluded that senior leaders take bullying very seriously and the school deals effectively with the few instances of bullying which do arise.
- Teachers know students and their needs well and work effectively with other agencies to support students' individual circumstances because the school is committed to promoting equality of opportunity.
- Opportunities for students to take on leadership roles are presented through form captain, sports leaders and prefect roles.
- The behaviour and safety of students are not outstanding because students' attendance requires improvement. Older students have better attendance than their younger peers.

The leadership and management are good

- The new headteacher has demonstrated outstanding leadership by guiding the school through a difficult period of change. Together with his deputy he has ensured the school's standards have been maintained by sustaining an absolute focus on students' achievement.
- Senior leaders have the right priorities. They are very clear about which aspects of the school need to improve further because they make outstanding use of systems to track and monitor students' achievement.
- A review of behavioural policies and procedures is underway. Senior leaders acknowledge attendance is a key area for improvement.
- Systems for monitoring and evaluating the quality of teaching are in place and are being further developed to include feedback from students.
- Performance management is used to inform decisions around pay and to reward good performance.
- All teachers have audited their skills against Teachers' Standards. Teachers who require support are identified and support packages are swiftly implemented. As a result, a significant number of teachers have been helped to improve their practice.
- Opportunities to share the outstanding practice which exists within the school are increasing.
- A range of subjects is offered at mainly GCSE level. Some teachers work hard to offer students varied opportunities to learn in new and exciting contexts. For example, inspectors observed highly motivated students in a Year 10 performing arts lesson creating a radio commercial in

collaboration with industry professionals from the radio station Juice FM.

- Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good, supported by outstanding teaching in religious education. Students are keen to help others. For instance, students have recently raised funds for a charity in Sierra Leone. A social enterprise project is undertaken annually by Year 10 and judged by business leaders. This year, students have been working with the 'Walk to school' charity to design activities for students in local primary feeder schools.
- Music makes a particular contribution to students' cultural development. For example, in a Year 8 lesson students developed their creativity and made outstanding progress by confidently performing a samba piece in a group ensemble to a very high standard.
- Good support has been provided by the local authority to assist the school's work, particularly the preparations for the new school build.
- All safeguarding requirements are met. Staff are fully trained and knowledgeable about risk assessment and child protection issues. The school takes all reasonable steps to ensure the behaviour and safety of students when attending off-site provision.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body has secured school leadership which is ambitious and determined to improve students' achievement even further. Governors know the school well and have a good understanding of the quality of teaching, how staff are rewarded and the school's use of the pupil premium because they receive excellent information through the headteacher's regular reports. Governors are committed to extending their skills through appropriate training from the local authority and most recently from an external consultant who supports the school's work.

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	105097
Local authority	Wirral
Inspection number	412339

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	640
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Jane Gordon
Headteacher	Tony Taylor
Date of previous school inspection	24 June 2010
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