

# Ridgewood High School

Park Road West, Wollaston, Stourbridge, DY8 3NQ

Inspection dates		6–7 March 2014	
Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Requires improvement	3
	This inspection:	<b>Good</b>	<b>2</b>
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' achievement has improved since the previous inspection, and students left the school last year with results that were above the national average in several subjects.
- Disabled students and those who have special educational needs make good progress as a result of the effective additional support they receive.
- The achievement of students supported by the pupil premium is rising to be close to that of their peers.
- Teaching has improved and is usually, at least, good. Teachers check that students understand their work and learn quickly in lessons.
- Teaching assistants work well with groups of students and with individuals, ensuring they quickly develop good literacy skills.
- Students' behaviour is good. They are polite and considerate around the school and keen to learn in lessons.
- The safety of the students is good. They know how to keep themselves safe in a variety of situations.
- Leaders and managers have improved teaching and achievement since the previous inspection.
- All leaders, including governors, have an accurate understanding of the strengths and areas to develop in teaching throughout the school. The management of teachers' performance and the targets for improvement they are set help them to continually improve the quality of their teaching.
- Governors rigorously hold leaders and teachers to account, and underperformance is not tolerated.

### It is not yet an outstanding school because

- A few students are unclear how to improve their work, and are not sure what they need to do in order to reach their target grades.
- Sometimes, higher-ability students are set work that is too easy for them, and does not give them opportunities to apply their learning to new situations.
- Students do not have enough opportunity to develop their numeracy skills across different subjects.
- Subject leaders do not check that school policies relating to teaching, learning and behaviour are carried out consistently well by all staff.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 40 lessons, of which five were jointly observed with members of the senior leadership team. In addition, inspectors made several other short visits to lessons.
- Discussions were held with senior and subject leaders, the Chair and Vice Chair of the Governing Body, and other members, and a telephone conversation was held with a representative of the local authority
- Inspectors looked at a range of school documentation, including that relating to students' achievement, safeguarding and attendance.
- Responses from 36 parents to Parent View were taken into account, in addition to the school's own questionnaire for parents. Forty-one responses to the staff questionnaire were also considered.

## Inspection team

Clare Saunders, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Mark Bailie	Additional Inspector
Susan Tabberer	Additional Inspector
Robert Steed	Additional Inspector

# Full report

## Information about this school

- This is a smaller-than-average secondary school, where most students are of White British heritage.
- The proportion of students supported by the pupil premium is lower than the national average. (The pupil premium provides the school with additional funding for students known to be eligible for free school meals, those in the care of the local authority and those who have a parent in the armed services.)
- The proportion of disabled students and those who have special educational needs supported by school action is lower than the national average. The proportion of these students supported by a statement of special educational needs or by school action plus is above the national average.
- There are no students attending alternative provision away from the school site on a regular basis. A few students undertake work placements from time to time at a range of workplaces where these are relevant to future career courses.
- The school is part of the Stourbridge Educational Trust, which is a partnership of local schools.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.

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

- Increase the proportion of teaching that is outstanding, so that all students achieve to their highest potential, by:
  - ensuring students know how to improve their work and what they need to do to reach their improvement targets
  - consistently setting learning activities that enable higher-ability students to apply what they know to other, more challenging, learning situations
  - developing regular opportunities for students to practise and apply their numeracy skills across a range of subjects
  - subject leaders making regular checks that school policies relating to teaching, learning and behaviour management are consistently followed by all staff.

## Inspection judgements

### The achievement of pupils

**is good**

- The standards that students reach by the time they leave the school have improved since the previous inspection. Last year, Year 11 students left with much improved GCSE results, for example, in English and history, that were above the national average.
- There are particular strengths in the progress and attainment of students in English, where students achieve highly in Key Stages 3 and 4. Students' achievement in mathematics has not matched that in English in the past. However, the achievement of students currently in the school is rapidly improving in mathematics and is close to and, sometimes, above that in English, especially in Key Stage 3.
- Disabled students and those who have special educational needs make good progress as a result of additional support and tuition which are carefully planned to develop each student's literacy and numeracy skills.
- The most-able students make good progress throughout the school. They benefit from a wide range of subjects to choose from, and are given the opportunity to sit some GCSE examinations at the end of Year 10 if the school judges this is in the student's best interests. The time gained in Year 11 is used to secure the highest grades in core subjects and prepare them for AS level study, enabling them to gain a greater depth of knowledge in these subjects. However, in a few lessons, some of the most-able students are set work that does not stretch their abilities to the full.
- Students' skills are further enhanced by opportunities to do work-related learning off-site relevant to their potential careers – for example, in medicine. Students of all abilities benefit from these additional learning opportunities and gain in experience and maturity.
- Students eligible for support from the pupil premium achieved results in English and mathematics in 2013 that were a grade behind those of their peers. They are supported by a good range of additional provision. Consequently, the attainment and progress that eligible students were currently seen to be making are rising in most year groups and subjects.
- The school has allocated the additional funding for the Year 7 'catch up' premium to provide specialist resources and tuition to develop reading and literacy skills. This has proved to be of great benefit to the students who struggled with key skills on entry to the school. For example, they quickly develop their reading skills using phonics (the sounds that letters and sounds make).
- There is a whole-school approach to developing literacy across different subjects, and teachers routinely encourage accurate spelling, punctuation and grammar. A similar approach has not yet been applied in numeracy.

### The quality of teaching

**is good**

- The quality of teaching has improved since the previous inspection. It is at least good, with some that is outstanding.

- Students are keen to learn, and readily engage in learning activities that enable them to make good progress. For example, in a Year 11 French lesson, students worked on a range of activities designed to practise and extend their speaking skills in French with plenty of opportunities for them to discuss topics in the language and deepen their understanding. These opportunities, combined with an interesting topic, meant all students learned and developed new skills quickly.
- In lessons, teachers check that students understand their learning. Students respond readily and engage with teachers and their peers. For example, in a media lesson, students reflected on different aspects of crime and horror to influence their own analysis of the topic.
- Teachers mark students' work regularly and students generally respond to the written feedback that they receive with their own well-considered written response. However, there are some instances where feedback to students' on the quality of their work leaves them unclear how they could improve it and exactly what they need to do to move closer to their target grades.
- Teaching assistants are used well. They offer support to individual students, and provide additional tuition. Their good relationships with the students and their understanding of the learning priorities for the students they support ensure that all learn well.
- Where students learn very quickly and make excellent progress, the work they are set is challenging and takes their learning forward rapidly. However, students of higher-ability are not always set work that fully stretches them. Occasionally, time in lessons is lost as students repeat work they have already learned successfully to gain the knowledge intended, and they are not given the opportunity to apply their knowledge more widely.
- Teachers are skilled in promoting literacy across different subjects, and reinforce high expectations of speaking, listening and writing. For example, in a GCSE science lesson, students explained 'meiosis' by different means and gained the competence to tackle examination questions. Their successful learning of the meaning of the term resulted in creative responses of high quality from the students as they applied their literacy skills in science. Although there are some instances where numeracy skills are reinforced across subjects, there are fewer opportunities for this compared to those in literacy.

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

- The behaviour of students is good. Their conduct around the school is polite, courteous and considerate of others. They are proud of their school and of their own achievements.
- Students' attendance has improved and is currently above the latest national figures. They enjoy coming to school and respond well to the many incentives and rewards to encourage and recognise good attendance, such as inter-house attendance competitions and certificates.
- The behaviour of students in lessons is largely good. They respond well to the behaviour policy and are attentive and eager to learn. On a very few occasions, teachers do not implement the behaviour policy consistently, and this leads to a few students not working as hard as they could.
- Students are keen to take an active role in the school, and feel strongly that their views are listened to by the headteacher and other staff. Some students form a leadership group, where students have responsibilities that echo those of the senior leaders in the school. It is through this forum that they responsibly suggest changes to continually improve the school.

- There is a strong sense of community, both within the school and in the wider world, where past students return to help raise funds for those projects that current students support in school. For example, past students help raise funds for the school's Gambia project, which helps provide resources for a community in Gambia. It is notable that one in every three students in Year 10 will shortly be visiting Africa as part of this project – an excellent opportunity to enhance their cultural and moral development.
- The school's work to keep students safe and secure is good. Leaders ensure that the school building is secure and staff are only appointed after rigorous checks are carried out to ensure they are suitable. Students have a clear understanding of right and wrong, and understand how to keep themselves safe in a variety of situations, including using the internet.
- Students understand different forms of bullying, say it rarely occurs and are confident that any incidents are dealt with swiftly on the few occasions where they do occur.

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

- Leaders and managers, including governors, have implemented plans for improvement that have resulted in students' achievement and the quality of teaching becoming good. School leaders have high expectations of students that are linked to the school's focus of what is referred to as the 'four A's' – attendance, appearance, attitudes and achievement – and this underpins the constant drive for improvement.
- Leaders have ensured that initiatives, such as improving literacy across the school, are well established and are closely monitored and evaluated for the impact on students' learning. They have a very clear awareness of the strengths of the school, and where the next developments need to be – for example, the development of numeracy opportunities across different subjects.
- Senior leaders, led by the highly effective headteacher, keep a close watch on the quality of teaching, and use this information to provide training for staff, both as a whole staff group and for individuals. Consequently, staff feel supported as they continually develop their skills.
- Performance management systems are used to reward good teaching and to provide guidance for teachers on how to improve their skills. Pay rises are not automatically awarded, but are linked to teachers' performance in enabling students to make progress and achieve well.
- The impact of subject leaders on fully applying school policies relating to teaching, learning and behaviour management is not as effective as that of senior leaders in enabling staff to performance to their best. A programme of training is being provided for subject leaders and teaching staff to help them to develop their skills. For example, calendared meetings enable staff to plan lessons and topics together. Staff also benefit from additional training provided as part of the Stourbridge Educational Trust.
- The design of the curriculum allows for students to take some GCSE subjects early in Year 10, and the follow up to early entry and examination success is well managed. For example, students either have extra time allocated for greater depth of study at a higher level, or for alternative study in a similar subject area, such as GCSE statistics. Other opportunities enable some students to reinforce key skills in English and mathematics. Students particularly enjoy the range of subjects they can choose from, and all go on to further education or employment at the end of Year 11.

- The local authority recognises the strengths in leadership, and has helped the school to overcome weaknesses. For example, it helped the school to develop an effective approach to the use of literacy across the curriculum.

■ **The governance of the school:**

- Governors have a good understanding of the quality of teaching, and are rigorous in their approach to performance management, withholding pay rises until teachers' standards of performance rise where necessary. They actively review and adapt leaders' plans for the school's further development, and have a good understanding of what the data on students' performance indicate. They regularly challenge senior leaders about school performance, and provide support in making decisions for the future. They are confident in leadership of the school, but recognise that subject leaders do not always check consistency of good practice within their departments. They ensure statutory duties, such as safeguarding, are met.

## 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>	103866
<b>Local authority</b>	Dudley
<b>Inspection number</b>	431685

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Secondary
<b>School category</b>	Foundation
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–16
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	777
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	John Hodt
<b>Headteacher</b>	Clive Nutting
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	15 November 2012
<b>Telephone number</b>	01384 818445
<b>Fax number</b>	01384 818446
<b>Email address</b>	info@ridgewood.dudley.sch.uk

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