

Ridgeway School

Moorland Rd, Plympton, Plymouth, PL7 2RS

Inspection dates 24–25 April 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected	
	This inspection:	Requires improvement	3
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3
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 school that requires improvement. It is not good because:

- The progress students make as they move through the school has not been fast enough.
- The proportion of students attaining five or more A* to C GCSE grades, including English and mathematics, is below average.
- Teachers have high expectations for their students but the pace of learning over time has been too slow. Effective practice is not always shared between staff.
- Some students known to be eligible for additional funding and some students with special educational needs have underachieved.
- The sixth form requires improvement because attainment is below average in some A-level subjects.
- Based on their starting points, too many middle and low-ability students do not make the progress they should make, especially in English and Mathematics.
- Changes to the members, and restructuring of the senior leadership team, have generated a secure capacity for improvement, but they have not yet had time to have an impact on the lack of progress made by some students in the past. Governors support the school well.

The school has the following strengths:

- Senior leaders have successfully improved the quality of teaching, which has led to better progress for current students.
- Although students supported by the additional funding make slower progress than other students, the gap is narrowing quickly.
- Students' behaviour and attitudes to learning are good.
- Students' achievement in vocational courses in Key Stage 4 and the sixth form is very good.
- Teaching in most subjects is now good.
- Systems for checking students' progress and setting targets have been refined and are being used well to support the learning of students.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 42 lessons, of which 25 were joint observations with senior leaders. Inspectors also made a number of visits to assemblies and tutorial sessions and carried out short visits to classrooms across a range of subjects.
- Discussions were held with the headteacher, senior and middle leaders, teachers, pastoral leaders, the Chair of the Governing Body and vice chair, and the school improvement partner.
- Inspectors spoke to students in lessons, at breaks and at lunchtimes. They also met with several different groups of students.
- The inspection team looked at a range of documentation including the school's checks on how well it is doing, the improvement plan, and statistical information about students' progress, achievement, behaviour and exclusions. They looked at the work of a wide range of students.
- Inspectors looked at school documents relating to the management of the staff's work and training arrangements for teachers and other staff, lesson observations, arrangements for the safeguarding of students and for governance.
- Inspectors took into account the 57 responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View, and an interview with a parent or carer and a telephone call from a parent or carer.

Inspection team

Christine Young, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Terry Payne	Additional Inspector
Dr Malcolm Davidson	Additional Inspector
Marian Marks	Additional Inspector
Christine Emerson	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Ridgeway School converted to become an academy in April 2011. When its predecessor school, called Ridgeway School, was previously inspected by Ofsted in March 2009, it was judged as satisfactory.
- Ridgeway School is an average-sized secondary school.
- Almost all students are of White British heritage. Very few students speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of students eligible for the pupil premium is below average. This is additional money allocated by the government for looked after children, those eligible for free school meals and, until April 2014, students with a parent or carer in the armed services. The school has a very small number of looked after children and about 60 children of service families.
- A small number of pupils are eligible for Year 7 catch-up funding, which is for pupils who did not achieve the expected Level 4 in reading or mathematics at the end of Year 6.
- The proportion of disabled students and those with special educational needs supported by school action is above the national average, as is the proportion of students supported by school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs.
- The school has a specially resourced provision for pupils with special educational needs which caters for up to 10 students on the autistic spectrum.
- A small number of students attend off-site vocational training provision at Bretonside, Plymouth and City College Plymouth.
- The school has a collaborative sixth form.
- The school is a member of the Plym Learning Partnership, which is a collaboration with Hele's Trust, Coombe Dean School and Plymstock School.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum levels expected for students' attainment and progress.
- The school does not enter students early for GCSE examinations.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise students' achievement and quicken their progress, especially for the lowest and middle-ability students, by ensuring that:
 - all teachers use information about how well students are doing to plan lessons which enable all to achieve their very best
 - the quality of marking and feedback is consistently high across the school and provides advice to students about what exactly they need to do in order to improve their work
 - all teachers challenge students' thinking and probe their understanding
 - middle leaders are empowered to hold teachers to account for any students who are underachieving.
- Share the existing effective practice that already exists so that teaching can be improved to outstanding levels to enable students to make consistently good or better progress in all classes.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- GCSE results have not been as good as they should be, especially in English. In 2013 the percentage of students gaining five or more GCSE grades A* to C, including English and mathematics, was below average.
- In 2013, the percentage of students achieving AS and A-level pass grades was below average. There was some variation between subjects, but overall the outcomes were not good enough.
- Students eligible for the pupil premium made progress at a slower rate than others in 2013; they attained one GCSE grade lower in English and half a GCSE grade lower in mathematics.
- In 2013 students made rapid progress in GCSE core science and religious education. Overall, the 2013 GCSE results were much better than they had been in 2012. Current school data show that the rising trend is continuing with students' overall attainment on track to be above average in 2014.
- In 2013, sixth form students following vocational courses achieved above average results. They represent over a third of the total number of students in the sixth form. Sixth form students are now on track to achieve above the national average AS and A-level pass grades in 2014. Students make rapid progress in art, photography, textiles, modern foreign languages and health and social care as a result of high expectations and successful teaching.
- Scrutiny of work and lesson observations confirm that most students are now beginning to make better progress in English and mathematics and are working at levels closer to those expected for their age. Students' attitudes to learning are good.
- Disabled students and students supported with a statement of special educational needs do better than other students. The specialist autistic spectrum unit provides excellent support and students achieve at least as well as others.
- A small number of students attend alternative provision outside the school. They are successful and achieve well. These students have developed greater confidence and self-esteem through raising their aspirations and focusing on preparations for future life.
- In Year 7, the catch-up funding has been used effectively. Students are reading more often and are now better at reading with understanding and confidence. The school is in the process of embedding a literacy programme across the curriculum, which is already having a direct impact on improving reading, writing and numeracy.
- Retention rates in the sixth form are extremely high and destinations include Oxford University and many of the Russell group of universities. The school prepares students very well for higher education.
- The quality of the artwork on display around the school is exceptional and enhances the learning environment for all.

The quality of teaching

is good

- There is a focus on raising the quality of teaching and learning in the school. The result is that teaching over time is now good. The majority of teachers have high expectations and ensure that work is carefully matched to the different ability groups in the class.
- Teachers know their subjects well. Many, but not all, ask questions that challenge, encourage and help students to think more deeply and come up with their own ideas and answers to problems. This was clearly evident in a Year 10 geography lesson where students had to create their own revision wheel related to the carbon footprint.
- Teachers routinely set clear targets for learning so that students know what they are expected to achieve. In the best lessons teachers make targets easier to understand to help accelerate progress.
- Where learning is rapid, teachers give students well-structured tasks that help them to develop skills and understanding. Students enjoy learning by being actively engaged and required to work

with others in groups or pairs; they say this helps them to understand work and learn new things.

- Teaching is particularly strong in art and photography where the standard of work produced is exemplary. The teachers' passion and drive inspire all students to experiment with their work and develop their creativity, which results in exceptionally high-quality pieces of work being produced.
- Teachers use praise and encouragement well to motivate students. Effective discussion during lessons is used to create a positive atmosphere where students are keen to contribute and are not afraid to make mistakes.
- Some of the marking and feedback given by teachers is usually good and lead to students having an accurate understanding of how well they are working and what they need to do to improve. However, this good practice is not sufficiently widespread and some teachers do not give students enough good quality guidance.
- In the sixth form, students are very keen to learn, especially where teaching is aimed at developing their analytical and reflective skills. Students are most confident here when applying skills, knowledge and understanding to real situations.
- A strong feature of the teaching in the sixth form is the well-targeted, specialist support given to individual students. Assessment is effectively used to promote learning for all abilities as teachers know what particular help students need.
- Teachers and teaching assistants work together to provide support that is well matched to the assessments they make of students' abilities. This ensures that all students, including disabled students and those who have special educational needs and the most able, make progress; however, effective use of data by staff in planning assessments is not consistent.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Students are good ambassadors for their school. They are calm, polite and courteous, both in the classroom and around school. They are well meaning, inquisitive and fun to talk to. Students are proud of their school and the atmosphere is one of respect, sharing and learning together.
- The school's work to keep students safe and secure is very good.
- The behaviour of students is good, and they have excellent relationships with staff. This makes the school a very pleasant and purposeful place in which to learn. Attitudes to learning are good.
- Students understand risk and have a very good understanding of the different types of bullying, for example cyber or homophobic bullying. They say that bullying is rare and express with great confidence that should any occur it would be dealt with quickly and efficiently.
- The school has good systems for managing students' behaviour and also provides high-quality pastoral support. There are established procedures for ensuring the good behaviour and safety of those students who attend off-site provision.
- Provision for students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is strong and well supported by the caring ethos of the school. Sixth form students take on extra responsibilities, such as being learning mentors to help younger students in lessons and to strengthen their reading and writing.
- Students, including those in the sixth form, are proud of their school and have a very clear, moral sense of what is right and wrong. They are proactive in raising funds for charities including Jeremiah's Journey, the Cystic Fibrosis Trust and the Prostate Cancer Charity. Students have also supported an overseas charity, the SOS Appeal, which has helped to build a village in Zambia.
- The school provides effective support for students from services families through the HMS Heroes Ridgeway Club. A small group of these students have successfully made an exciting documentary film for HMS Heroes, demonstrating the effects that life in a services family can sometimes have on students at school. The film is to be distributed to other schools where there are students from service families.
- Students' enjoyment of school is reflected in their above average attendance. Their punctuality to lessons reflects their enthusiasm for their school and their learning.

- The student leadership teams, which represent sixth formers and students in Years 7 to 11, allow students to take on extra responsibilities and have a voice in shaping the future of their school. They take on projects, and work with others on school initiatives to improve school life.
- The responses to Parent View indicate that the vast majority of parents and carers agree that their children are very safe at school and very well looked after, and that they would recommend the school to other parents and carers.

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher and the senior leadership team, including those responsible for the sixth form, have a focused, inclusive vision for the school's future. This is leading to improvements in the quality of teaching and students' achievement. There is a clear awareness of the school's main strengths and weaknesses.
- Changes in the roles and responsibilities of the leadership team, combined with the appointment of a new deputy headteacher and some other senior leaders, have strengthened the school's leadership. The successful implementation of measures which have improved teaching and achievement confirm the school's capacity to improve further.
- The robust programme of development for middle leaders is having an impact on current students' achievement and progress as staff are now more accountable for their students' progress.
- The leadership team's analysis of students' progress and its accurate evaluation of the school's work provide teachers and governors with a clear understanding of the school's performance.
- The school has introduced a more robust performance management system for teachers, which is accurate and clearly identifies the areas that need to improve. The quality of teachers' work and students' progress is linked to pay progression and to the Teachers' Standards.
- The Plym Learning Partnership provides excellent opportunities for staff to undertake specialist training in school leadership and to share best practice across the schools.
- The leadership of the sixth form is strong and the school offers a wide-ranging sixth form curriculum, including vocational subjects. Very few Year 11 students do not stay on into the sixth form. The school is very proud of the personalised support that guides students to make the right subject choices for Year 12. Practically all sixth form students move on to apprenticeships, university, further education or employment.
- A flexible timetable and the wide curriculum, with many different combinations of subjects, give students a very good breadth and choice of learning pathways and personalised learning programmes.
- Pupil premium funding has been successfully used to provide additional teachers, literacy and numeracy support, intervention programmes and a summer school focused on supporting the incoming Year 6 students. There is a strong focus on closing the gap as well as improving literacy skills.
- The school's commitment to equality of opportunity is demonstrated by its determination to give all students the chance to excel and achieve their potential.
- Students benefit from a wide range of enrichment opportunities, including sports, music, drama, art, photography, and opportunities which greatly enhance leadership and learning. Students are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training and employment.
- The school uses an independent school improvement partner to help assess how well it is doing.
- All safeguarding requirements are met and the staff receive regular training in safeguarding. They have a good awareness of child protection and risk assessment issues.
- The school has developed a good partnership with parents and carers. Much is being done to engage with parents and carers through regular updates on students' progress, newsletters and through the school's website.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body takes an active role in the life of the school. Governors understand data

well so they know how well the school is doing; they have a good understanding of its strengths and weaknesses. They know how good teaching is, holding leaders to account for the quality of teaching and students' achievement.

- The governing body is aware of how targets are set for teachers and monitors how these targets are linked to pay increases. Governors are involved and evaluate how additional funds are spent and the impact they have.
- All governors have undertaken training and are confident about their roles and responsibilities. Governors make regular visits to school and are linked with curriculum areas. They take active steps to engage with parents and carers.

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	136556
Local authority	Plymouth
Inspection number	402742

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

Type of school	Academy converter
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	11–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	911
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	232
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Paul Hutchings
Headteacher	John Didymus
Date of previous school inspection	7–8 October 2009
Telephone number	01752 338373
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