

Ridge View School

Cage Green Road, Tonbridge, TN10 4PT

Inspection dates

17–18 June 2015

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	Outstanding	1
Leadership and management		Outstanding	1
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Outstanding	1
Quality of teaching		Outstanding	1
Achievement of pupils		Outstanding	1
Early years provision		Outstanding	1
Sixth form provision		Outstanding	1

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an outstanding school.

- Senior leaders have built very successfully on the outcomes of the previous inspection. They have established a school with the highest expectations and aspirations for all pupils.
- The restructured governing body is highly effective. It works closely with senior leaders to check all aspects of the school's work and support the drive towards raising standards.
- A relatively large number of staff have leadership or middle management responsibilities. However, their precise roles are not always clear and so they are not always as effective as they could be.
- Teaching is typically outstanding. Teachers manage their class teams very efficiently. As a result, all adults contribute effectively to supporting pupils' learning. Staff manage pupils' complex behaviour exceptionally well.
- Adults' skilled use of a variety of communication approaches enables all pupils to participate fully in all activities.
- Pupils in Key Stages 2 to 4 make excellent progress. Their achievement is outstanding compared with that of pupils of the same age and starting points in other schools nationally.
- The early years provision does an outstanding job in assessing Nursery children and in accelerating their learning when they move into Reception.
- Pupils' behaviour is outstanding and they have an excellent attitude to their work. They show great delight in learning and are always keen to do well.
- The post-16 provision is outstanding. The excellent progress that students make in their learning and personal development gives them a very good preparation for leaving school. All school leavers move into continuing education, training or social services provision.
- Pupils leave school with a good understanding of multicultural modern Britain and its characteristic features, such as tolerance and respect for others.
- There is outstanding practice for ensuring pupils' safety and welfare. Detailed procedures are rigorously applied in practice. An overwhelming number of staff confirm that pupils are safe, and the vast majority of parents and carers agree.
- The majority of parents and carers are supportive of the school. A large majority agree that their children are happy in school and make good progress.
- Every member of staff is proud to be associated with the school, and they are virtually unanimous in confirming that they know what the school is trying to achieve.
- The school has constructive links with partners. The links with local colleges provide excellent social experiences and very good opportunities for older pupils to acquire work-related learning skills.
- The local community is used well as an opportunity for pupils to practise their skills in real-life situations. However, these planned visits tend to be restricted to older pupils.

Information about this inspection

- The inspection team visited classes in all key stages and observed 13 lessons. Each of these was taught by a different teacher, and every lesson was observed jointly by an inspector and a senior leader.
- Meetings were held with two members of the governing body, including the Chair, and the school’s improvement partner from the local authority.
- Discussions took place with all three senior leaders, a teaching and learning leader, the personalised interventions manager, and the teachers with particular responsibility for early years, English and mathematics.
- The inspection team gathered the views of parents and carers from the 30 who completed Parent View, the online questionnaire, and from the two anonymous letters that were delivered to the school. The inspection team also noted the views of the 55 parents and carers who had responded to the school’s own survey that had been carried out just a few weeks ago.
- Inspectors examined the questionnaires that 69 members of staff completed.
- An inspector met with a small group of pupils in order to collect their views of the school.
- The inspection team looked at pupils’ work and a very wide range of documentation. This included information about pupils’ progress and achievement, attendance records, safeguarding procedures, behaviour logs, leaders’ reviews of the school’s strengths and development areas and improvement planning.

Inspection team

Mike Kell, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Annette Fidderman	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Inspectors were aware during this inspection that a serious incident which occurred at the setting since the previous inspection is under investigation by the appropriate authorities. While Ofsted does not have the power to investigate incidents of this kind, actions taken by the setting in response to the incident were considered alongside the other evidence available at the time of the inspection to inform inspectors' judgements.
- Ridge View is a broadly average-sized special school. It is a district provision for pupils with severe, profound and complex learning difficulties, and around half of them have autism. All pupils have a statement of special educational needs or an education, health and care plan
- Children in the early years provision account for almost a fifth of the school roll. Two thirds of these children attend the assessment Nursery part time. Some of these subsequently transfer into Reception in other schools, although most move into Reception in Ridge View. All Reception children attend full time.
- About three quarters of pupils are boys. The vast majority of pupils are of White British heritage, and the remainder represent a wide range of ethnic backgrounds.
- The school receives pupil premium funding for a quarter of its pupils, which is broadly in line with the national average. Pupil premium is additional government funding for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and for children who are looked after. Only a very small number of pupils are looked after by the local authority.
- The school also receives physical education and sport funding for primary-aged pupils, and additional funding to support the learning of Year 7 pupils.
- One member of the school's senior leadership team has been appointed since the previous inspection. Membership of the governing body has changed considerably since then.
- The school receives regular visits from the local authority's school improvement partner.
- There is not a separate post-16 provision. Key Stage 4 pupils and post-16 students are taught together in three ability classes.
- Many Key Stage 4 pupils and post-16 students attend weekly classes at Hadlow College, where they follow courses in land-based studies, and West Kent College to study work-related courses, such as hairdressing and beauty, construction and drama.
- The early years provision very recently achieved the Continuing Professional and Learning Development Quality Mark Silver Award.
- The school acts as the base for the team that supports local schools in working with pupils with learning difficulties, but very few school staff are involved in this outreach work.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Make leadership and management even more effective by clarifying the roles of staff with leadership and management responsibilities more precisely, in order to make more efficient use of their skills in maintaining and further developing the quality of teaching.
- Extend the opportunities for pupils in Key Stages 2 and 3 to learn in the community, so that they can practise in real-life situations the communication and numeracy skills they have learned in school.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are outstanding

- The highly influential headteacher and senior colleagues, together with a very effective governing body, have responded extremely well to the findings of the previous inspection. They have raised the quality of provision and the impact that it has on pupil outcomes. The school is very safe and orderly and one in which pupils flourish academically and personally.
- Equality of opportunity and respect for others are at the heart of the school's work. Leaders have developed a culture in which all pupils have the security of knowing that they will not be intimidated or harassed.
- Senior leaders lead by example. Their expectations are explicit and unforgiving. They accept nothing but the best and expect all staff to share this aspiration. They are unrelenting in their pursuit of outstanding classroom practice, so that all pupils have the opportunity to succeed in a school with clear boundaries and expectations of behaviour.
- There are a relatively large number of middle leaders and managers. They have designated roles, which they carry out well, but their precise responsibilities are not always well defined. They are not being used as effectively or as efficiently as they could be in raising standards. Staff are members of class teams, and teachers lead these teams very well.
- Extremely thorough and rigorous systems are in place to check how well the school is doing. As a result, leaders have a detailed understanding of areas of the school's work that require further development in the pursuit of excellence. These priorities form the basis of the structured school improvement plan. This focuses on the impact on standards that developments will make, and how this will be judged.
- The school receives very effective support and challenge from its improvement partner. She and school leaders work very closely together. This partnership has been an important factor in developing the school since the previous inspection.
- There is a very structured approach to developing and maintaining high quality teaching. Information such as pupils' progress, assessment, planning and the outcomes of lesson observations all contribute to giving leaders a complete picture of teachers' work. Individuals who require additional help are then supported through a training, coaching and mentoring programme.
- Robust procedures for managing teachers' performance play an important role in maintaining high quality teaching. However, leaders are successfully establishing the principle that teachers should be reflective and constantly monitor their own practice. They have devised a toolkit to help teachers to do this.
- The school has an extremely good variety of learning activities that meet the needs of pupils with a range of learning difficulties. The development of pupils' language, literacy, numeracy and communication skills forms the basis of all learning, along with an emphasis on promoting their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. There are opportunities for pupils to supplement their class-based learning with visits into the community, although Key Stages 2 and 3 pupils could be given more of these experiences.
- Helping pupils to appreciate the nature of modern Britain and its features, such as respect and tolerance, is inherent in all of the school's work. Leaders recognise that they could consolidate this even more by developing a more formal approach to checking exactly how and where these values are promoted.
- Pupils' learning and progress are monitored very regularly to check the extent to which each pupil is on track to meet challenging end of key stage targets. Additional support packages are put into place whenever an individual's progress appears to be stalling.
- Pupils' behaviour and attendance are monitored equally well. Leaders have detailed knowledge of individuals' behaviour as well as of any behavioural patterns or trends across the school. Pupils are always supported by school staff when they are learning in local colleges, and so leaders are very well informed about pupils' attendance, behaviour and learning.
- Leaders use additional funding to support their pursuit of high standards. The impact of pupil premium and Year 7 'catch up' funding is evident in the excellent progress that these pupils make.
- Physical education and sport funding has increased pupils' participation in sporting activities and extended the range of these activities. An increasing number of pupils have been involved in activities such as boxercise, pentathlon and activities led by coaches who go into the school. There have been more opportunities for pupils to be engaged in competitive sport with other schools.
- The school generally has a very positive partnership with parents and carers, although their opinions on Parent View are not as positive as those expressed in a survey carried out by the school just a few weeks ago, to which far more parents and carers replied.
- Leaders have forged very good links with other partners. For instance, close collaboration with other schools, both special and mainstream, to moderate pupils' work enables leaders to have confidence in

teachers' assessments of pupils' levels.

- Pupils receive very good careers advice and guidance, and their families are closely involved in the process of determining the most appropriate placement for their children when they leave school. Leaders regularly monitor these pupils to see how successfully they have transferred their skills to another setting and subsequently sustained them. They use this information to gauge the appropriateness of these settings when advising other pupils and their families.
- Safeguarding arrangements meet all requirements and are highly effective. Policies and procedures are robust and secure, and their suitability is reviewed regularly.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body is a very effective team that has good first-hand knowledge of the school obtained through frequent visits. It holds leaders to account, and there is a designated governor with particular responsibility for checking the impact of additional funding.
 - The governing body is highly supportive of leaders' approach to developing teachers' practice. It is able to do this effectively because it receives frequent and detailed information about the quality of teaching. By being so well informed, governors are full partners in making decisions relating to pay, based on their understanding of the link between pay and performance. They are fully aware of the support mechanisms available for less effective teachers.
 - Governors examine closely the regular reports that they receive about all features of the school's work, such as pupils' progress, attendance and behaviour. They are very prepared to question and, if need be, to challenge these reports if they require more clarification.

The behaviour and safety of pupils

are outstanding

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding. The complexity of some pupils' autism inevitably, on occasion, results in challenging behaviour as they struggle to communicate or cope with change. In spite of this, pupils' behaviour overall is excellent. In a school that has so many pupils with complex difficulties that could result in them displaying challenging behaviour, it is impressive that the majority of pupils behave in an exemplary fashion.
- The school is very effective in helping pupils with complex autism to improve their behaviour. As a result, these pupils make outstanding progress in learning how to maintain their attention and to comply with requests and instructions. They behave remarkably well, especially in terms of coping with change, making choices and communicating their feelings to adults other than through their behaviour.
- There are excellent relationships throughout the school. Adults and pupils interact very well and pupils learn to grow increasingly tolerant of each other. They develop awareness of others' needs and learn to respect them as individuals. Staff confirm unanimously that there is no bullying, and the vast majority of parents and carers agree. Pupils report that staff deal immediately with any instances of unacceptable behaviour.
- Pupils' behaviour is so good that the school has not had to exclude any pupils since the previous inspection. There are no racist or serious incidents and staff very rarely have to intervene physically to manage difficult situations.
- Pupils' behaviour is excellent in lessons and around the school, such as at break time and in the dining room. There is no litter or graffiti and pupils do not interfere with each other's work or with the displays around the school.
- Pupils have extremely positive attitudes to learning. Their attendance is good. The overall attendance rate is reduced by the prolonged absences of a few pupils with more complex medical conditions, but pupils generally go to school whenever they are fit to do so.
- Pupils' behaviour in the community and in college is equally good as they transfer their positive attitudes and enthusiasm into these different settings.
- Pupils make excellent progress in their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Insofar as they are able, they acquire very good understanding of traditional British values such as tolerance and respect for differences.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is outstanding. Staff are very conscious of their responsibility to maintain pupils' safety both in and out of school. They are vigilant and supervise pupils closely at all times. Risk assessments are used very effectively to identify potentially difficult situations in school and when pupils are on college courses or otherwise engaged in off-site activities.

- Governors' and staff's ability to fulfil their safeguarding responsibilities is maintained through an ongoing training programme which ensures that their knowledge and skills are kept up to date.
- The school takes all possible precautions to vet potential staff. Leaders and governors are trained in safer recruitment procedures, and they apply these robustly to prevent pupils coming into contact with adults who not suitable for working with children.
- The school works very hard to develop pupils' appreciation of how to live a safe and healthy life. Staff do this by giving pupils the knowledge and understanding to encourage them to make the right decisions and choices for themselves. In particular, the school does much to help pupils to develop awareness of the potential dangers of inappropriate internet use. Pupils were able to talk about the importance of e-safety and the use of social media.
- The governing body and leaders check all safeguarding policies and procedures closely to ensure that they remain fit for purpose.

The quality of teaching

is outstanding

- Teaching is typically outstanding across all subjects and key stages. This is an improvement from the previous inspection. It demonstrates the impact that leaders have had on addressing the area for improvement by developing the quality of practice throughout the school.
- Adults manage pupils' behaviour extremely well. Detailed checks provide them with information about each pupil's behavioural characteristics and how best to manage them. As a result, staff intervene swiftly and efficiently on the few occasions that pupils lose interest or become disturbed. Consequently, situations are resolved quickly, without the learning of others being disrupted.
- A noticeable feature of teaching is the way in which staff plan activities around pupils' personalised learning profiles. These show the longer-term aims that pupils are working towards and how all subjects can contribute to helping them achieve these aims. As a result, challenging activities are pitched at a level that requires thought and effort, but are not so difficult as to create frustration, which leads to lack of motivation.
- The development of pupils' communication skills is at the core of teaching in all subjects. Pupils' language and literacy skills are developed very well. Staff are very skilled at using a wide range of communication approaches to enable all pupils to express themselves and be active participants in learning. This ranges from symbols and picture exchange, to signing and the use of electronic switches and tablets.
- Teaching enables pupils to make excellent progress in mathematics. Staff do this by making the most of all opportunities to develop pupils' mathematical language and to reinforce their understanding of number, space, shape and time.
- Teaching does much to support pupils' personal development and growth through the use of consistent routines and expectations. For instance, lessons routinely encourage pupils with autism to recognise when activities start and when they are due to stop, when change is going to happen, and when they have to make a choice or a decision.
- Teachers and teaching assistants monitor pupils' work constantly. They are skilled at knowing when to intervene with support and prompts and when to stand back and let pupils persevere to solve things for themselves. Such close checking also gives adults the chance to challenge pupils even more if they complete their work quickly.
- Teaching assistants are generally managed very efficiently. They know their exact roles in supporting learning. They also have good knowledge of the pupils with whom they work and so they are able to recognise changes in behaviour and they have the skills to respond effectively.
- The school aims to encourage pupils to become independent learners. Teaching supports this aim very effectively as it routinely challenges pupils to take responsibility for their own learning.

The achievement of pupils

is outstanding

- Pupils who enter the school in Key Stages 1 to 4 are working at levels well below what is expected. Their attainment at the end of a key stage is still well below that which is typical for the age group, despite having made outstanding progress in mathematics, English and communication skills.
- Standards have risen as the quality of teaching improved in response to leaders' expectations that pupils will achieve challenging end of key stage targets.
- Pupils make outstanding progress in English and mathematics in achieving these targets. Pupil numbers are small in each year group, but achievement overall by the end of Years 6 and 11 is excellent. A big majority of pupils make or exceed the progress that is expected of them, given their age and starting

points, and a high proportion of them exceed this expectation. Overall, pupils achieve better than pupils of the same age and starting points in other schools.

- Pupils' rate of progress is such that many are beginning to narrow the gap between their attainment and that of all pupils nationally by the time they get to the end of a key stage.
- There are no significant differences between the achievements of different groups of pupils. The most able pupils and those with the most profound and complex needs both make significant progress over time. Boys and girls achieve equally well and there is no significant variation in the achievement of pupils from different ethnic backgrounds.
- The impact of the school's use of additional funding is evident in the progress made by disadvantaged pupils. They achieve as well as other pupils in the school in English and mathematics.
- Pupils' achievement in English is outstanding because of the relentless focus on developing their communication skills. Their speaking and listening skills are encouraged throughout the day, and the most able pupils make excellent progress in developing their reading and writing skills, which includes phonics (recognising the sounds that letters make).
- Pupils make outstanding progress in mathematics. Those working at lower levels develop growing understanding of mathematical vocabulary, such as big/small and long/short, and illustrate an increased ability to identify patterns and sequence ideas. The most able pupils develop more advanced skills, such as using a rule to measure and to record lengths using the correct units.
- Older pupils' very good achievement in the nationally accredited courses that they follow in school and at college enables them to leave school with formal recognition of their successes. Pupils are not entered early for examinations.
- Pupils' successful completion of coursework does much for their self-esteem. It contributes very well to their preparedness for leaving school, as does their achievement in developing the personal skills associated with employment, such as using the telephone and emails, and preparing for interview.

The early years provision

is outstanding

- Highly effective leadership and management are responsible for this very good provision.
- Children are referred to the Nursery for assessment purposes. Exceptionally good links with children's families and with other nurseries that children may attend enable staff to get a rounded picture of each child's needs.
- These strong links with children's families and other early years settings allow children to transfer smoothly into Reception at Ridge View, although a small minority go into other specialist provision or into mainstream.
- Children enter Reception with starting points that are significantly below what is typical for their age. Comprehensive assessment procedures provide staff with very detailed knowledge of each child. This enables them to produce individual learning programmes that detail how the provision intends to promote children's learning and personal development.
- Outstanding teaching uses this information very effectively. Staff provide an excellent range of carefully chosen activities that encourage all aspects of children's development. They balance adult-led activities with opportunities for free and expressive play very carefully. As a result, children learn very effectively through this combination of directed activities and by being stimulated by their own curiosity.
- Staff check children's learning routinely and they are adept at recording small steps of progress. They adapt activities quickly in response to these achievements and so children are always presented with appropriate challenge.
- Children learn so effectively because staff seize all opportunities, including the use of outdoor learning space, to encourage their learning. As a result, they make outstanding progress from their very low starting points. This prepares them very well for moving into Key Stage 1.
- Children make especially good progress in relation to their communication skills, literacy and understanding of the world around them.
- Many children also show significant improvement in their social awareness and willingness to follow requests and instructions. Their behaviour is excellent as they become increasingly accepting of classroom routines and show greater willingness to accept other children and to interact with adults.
- Staff are vigilant in ensuring that children play and learn in a safe environment.

The sixth form provision**is outstanding**

- The provision is led and managed very well. It is very well organised to meet the needs of each student, with programmes that match their age and interests and which provide challenge and incentive.
- Staff liaise very closely with students' families when they enter the provision in order to develop an understanding of their and their children's hopes and ambitions. The students are fully involved in this process, and so there is a shared understanding of the anticipated outcome when students leave school.
- As all those involved with each student have a common goal, they all make a meaningful contribution to devising a realistic individual study programme. This is tailored to meet each individual's attainment, learning style, level of personal development, strengths and ambitions.
- Students' programmes involve well-planned learning activities. They focus on the literacy and numeracy skills required in everyday life, such as reading signs, using a timetable and being competent with money so they can use public transport independently. Activities such as shopping and cooking also develop students' self-help skills.
- Students make outstanding progress in these areas, and their achievement in developing work-related learning skills is also excellent. They do very well on college courses and in the accredited courses that they follow in school.
- Students are very well prepared for life after school because the school gives them the skills to live as independently as possible and to realise their potential as full members of society.
- High quality teaching is the key to why students make such very good progress. Activities are planned around students' individual programmes and therefore, tasks are pitched at just the right level of challenge for each student, including the most able.
- Students respond extremely well to these challenges. They are keen to learn and their behaviour is outstanding. They show a developing maturity and social confidence, and they are increasingly prepared to tackle tasks independently without fear of failure.
- Students do not have the skills to move directly into employment. Very occasionally, students may get involved with a community-based work project, but they generally transfer into continuing education or training.
- Excellent procedures maintain students' safety. Whole-school arrangements ensure this when students are on site, and high staff supervision and detailed risk assessments maintain their safety when they are learning in the community or at college.

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	119050
Local authority	Kent
Inspection number	449481

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

Type of school	Special
School category	Community special
Age range of pupils	2–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	118
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	10
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Anna Pritchard
Headteacher	Jacqui Tovey
Date of previous school inspection	23–24 November 2011
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