

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
www.ofsted.gov.uk



20 April 2016

Mr Graham Allard
Headteacher
Ridgeway School
Hill Rise
Kempston
Bedford
Bedfordshire
MK42 7EB

Dear Mr Allard

Short inspection of Ridgeway School

Following my visit to the school on 15 March 2016 with Pauline MacMillan, Ofsted Inspector, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report the inspection findings. The visit was the first short inspection carried out since the school was judged to be good in November 2012.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection.

Leaders, governors, staff and pupils have a clear and shared vision for the future and all are determined to make the school an outstanding school as soon as possible. Staff, including newly qualified teachers, are clear that their ideas, concerns and difficulties are listened to and as a result, they feel valued and supported. The senior leaders have established a culture among all staff of high-quality teaching and learning not only for pupils, but parents and staff as well.

Parents value the way staff support pupils' transition into school. They feel that pupils are thoughtfully included and their needs are met effectively. As a result, individualised plans are detailed and enable placements to be successful. Parents also value the information shared with them on a daily basis through the home-school books and through the reporting systems. They also spoke positively about the willingness of staff to hear their concerns. As a result, they feel well supported by an appropriately trained staff team. Parents and pupils say that this is a nice place to be. Pupils come to school as often as they can because they are happy here and feel that the learning activities are well thought out and match pupils' needs and next steps in development. Pupil voice shows that pupils are actively involved in their learning.

Areas for improvement, identified in the previous inspection report have been resolved. All staff are ambitious and set high expectations of pupils. Outcomes are high across a broad range of subjects. Post-16 work shows that students are challenged to achieve well in a broad range of subjects, offered access to college courses and are provided with a wide range of opportunities to prepare them for the workplace. Opportunities are available for them to try different jobs and take part in mock interviews.

Pupils are well supported to learn beyond the confines of the school gate; pupils attend college or outreach provision as appropriate to the needs and stage of their development. Some pupils attend mainstream schools to develop their learning in a broader curriculum and as a transition for the next stage in their learning. Many pupils leave to successfully attend full-time college or school placements and do well.

A significant strength of the school is the manner in which staff skilfully support pupils in their learning, personal care and social skills. The dignity of pupils is paramount to all staff and is consistently well considered. Pupils with significant needs are treated with respect and intimate care happens seamlessly with no interruption to their learning. Pupils value one another and their differences, skills and needs. They are empathetic and caring to one another and offer support without needing to be prompted. One inspector watched a pupil hand over his swimming goggles, without prompting, to his friend so that he too could experience seeing under water for the first time. There is a true sense of community spirit in the very positive learning environment. Staff and pupils have excellent relationships and as a result, pupils enjoy their learning.

Safeguarding is effective.

Safeguarding arrangements are well managed. The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and that records are detailed and of high quality. The safeguarding of pupils is paramount. Policies and procedures are robust and leaders ensure that the relevant checks are made when employing new staff. There is a comprehensive programme of induction for new staff which ensures that they have a detailed understanding of safeguarding and know how to report any concerns they have. Staff and governors are regularly updated through face-to-face and online training and this ensures that more complex aspects of their work are included. For example, ensuring that they continue to effectively safeguard pupils with complex medical needs. All staff are careful to follow the safeguarding procedures. Pupils are happy and secure in this safe environment.

Risk assessments in relation to the needs of pupils involved in off-site trips and other activities are rigorous. The specific needs of pupils are carefully considered. As a result, pupils' safety is well protected.

Pupils say they feel safe and are kept safe by staff who care for them. They are clear that there is little bullying in the school but that if they had any concerns they would report them and that staff would act quickly to ensure that difficulties were

managed. Pupils talked of learning how to keep themselves safe and manage their time on social media. Staff have also taught pupils about safety in the wider community, such as how to access help and what to do if they are worried.

Inspection findings

- The school welcomes visitors into its reception area with colourful, well-presented displays which are followed through into learning environments. Pupils' work is celebrated and valued.
- Senior leaders are beginning to identify additional assessment tools to make sure that all the needs of each individual pupil are catered for. Pupil progress meetings between leaders and teachers are used to consider the wider aspects of learning, including pupils' personal development and progress, self-confidence and self-esteem. These are just beginning to be recorded and do not yet make clear if there are any gaps in provision.
- Leaders' checks on teaching and learning are accurate and based on robust evidence. They are used alongside pupils' progress information to inform performance management targets for staff. This means that leaders have an accurate view of where provision is strongest and where extra work is needed.
- The school's self-assessment is accurate, detailed and sharply focused. It is based on robust evidence. As a result, leaders and governors are clear about the next steps that need to be taken to improve the work of the school. However, the development plan in place to address these areas does not yet include specific measures so leaders and governors can check that the school is on track to meet the targets set for improvement.
- The well-developed knowledge and expertise of leaders and staff ensures that provision is well tailored to the individual needs of the pupils at the school. Pupils' individual needs are taken into account through teachers' planning and this is evident through observations of learning and pupils' work. Pupils are offered activities which are tailored to meet their needs and recorded in a way which is most valuable to them.
- Senior leaders demonstrate good capacity to continue to improve the school. The work of middle leaders is not fully developed so they do not fully contribute to analysis and improvement of the school's work.
- Leaders' sharp focus on teaching and learning ensures that members of the teaching team are skilled and enthusiastic about their roles. Consequently, the vast majority of pupils make at least good progress from their starting points at the time they join the school.
- Leaders ensure that pupils have access to the specific therapies and interventions they need. Pupils' physical, personal, emotional and health needs are supported effectively.
- Staff complete one-page profiles for each pupil. These identify what is important to the pupil, what they like, and what adults need to know to support them best. As a result, pupils' different learning styles are taken into account and pupils access learning at levels appropriate to their current needs and abilities.

- Pupils' social, moral, spiritual and cultural development is well considered. Pupils have opportunities to develop these aspects of their learning in their day-to-day work throughout the school. They learn to be tolerant of each other, to know about right and wrong and to understand other cultures. They are increasingly well prepared for life beyond school.
- Pupils are encouraged to use their developing skills and independence to access activities and to work with or alongside their peers. There are good examples of pupils using technology to learn and to develop environmental awareness. They also engage in art projects, including planning their own art exhibition. Other opportunities to extend their learning include using their voice in drama, and being part of a project to grow their own food on the school's allotment. As a result of this extended range of learning opportunities, pupils are keen to access learning for themselves and are inspired to work hard.
- Teachers plan learning activities which are appropriately challenging and link directly to targets set in pupils' individual education plans. These plans are constantly adapted to take into account the rapidly changing needs of the pupils.
- Pupils' behaviour is monitored and managed well. Records show that staff have a secure understanding of the triggers of challenging behaviour, what this looks like and how best to manage it. Staff are well trained to de-escalate challenging behaviour, and do this well. As a result, the learning of other pupils is not disrupted and pupils remain engaged and are helped to view their learning positively.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- leaders and staff use the improved range of information about pupils' achievement and well-being to identify specific gaps in their learning and address them quickly
- all leadership responsibilities are distributed carefully so that middle leaders know what is expected of their role and can take action to improve the aspects of the school's work they are responsible for
- specific and measurable criteria are incorporated into the development plan to enable governors to accurately monitor the work of the school and hold leaders to account.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, and the director of children's services for Bedford Borough Council. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Mary Rayner
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, inspectors spoke with the headteacher, deputy headteacher and other representatives from the teaching staff, a group of pupils, governors and a representative from the local authority. Calls were made to other education settings with which the school has strong links. Inspectors observed pupils in classrooms, at breaktime and as they moved around the school. Pupils' work and folders were jointly reviewed. A range of the school's own analyses and planning was considered, pupils' progress information was discussed, and safeguarding documentation and other records were scrutinised. Inspectors spoke to parents and also reviewed responses to the Ofsted online questionnaire, Parent View.