

Ridgeway Primary Academy

Park Avenue, South Shields, Tyne and Wear NE34 8AB

Inspection dates

17–18 November 2016

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| Overall effectiveness | Good |
| Effectiveness of leadership and management | Good |
| Quality of teaching, learning and assessment | Good |
| Personal development, behaviour and welfare | Good |
| Outcomes for pupils | Good |
| Early years provision | Good |
| Overall effectiveness at previous inspection | Requires improvement |

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The headteacher, other senior leaders and governors have worked tirelessly to transform the school since it became an academy. They have a shared drive and vision for pupils and staff to excel.
- Working together, senior leaders and governors have further improved teaching and learning in the past two years. The vast majority of pupils now make good progress from their different starting points, including disadvantaged pupils and the most able.
- Pupils' achievement is considerably better than at the time of the previous inspection. The proportion of pupils who reach the expected standard in the Year 1 phonics check has risen rapidly. Phonics teaching is good across the school.
- Middle leaders have not had such a positive impact upon improving pupils' standards as those in charge of English and mathematics. Middle leaders' plans to improve teaching in foundation subjects are not yet as robust as those produced by senior leaders.
- In 2016, Year 6 pupils made excellent progress in mathematics and writing. Staff teach these two subjects particularly well so that standards have increased for all groups of pupils.
- Pupils also made good progress in reading last year. However, standards in reading are not yet as high as those seen in writing and mathematics.
- Pupils have positive attitudes to learning. They enjoy school because their lessons are challenging and engaging. Pupils are enthusiastic learners but often do not take enough care with their spelling and handwriting
- Pupils demonstrate very good conduct around school. Senior leaders have established a calm and orderly environment.
- Governors have a robust understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development. They challenge leaders effectively to ensure continuous improvement and offer support to staff by providing many opportunities for training and development.
- The early years provision is good. Children's progress is particularly strong in Reception. Staff plan activities thoughtfully to meet the specific needs of individuals and the proportion of children who reach a good level of development has increased.
- Parents agree that their children are safe and well cared for by staff in the school.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Continue to increase progress and raise attainment across school by:
 - helping pupils to improve their written responses to reading comprehension questions so that they can write more detailed answers that fully demonstrate their knowledge and understanding
 - embedding the school's new spelling, handwriting and presentation procedures so that pupils quickly develop and then apply these skills in other subjects across the curriculum.
- Share the excellent leadership and management skills of senior leaders by:
 - training subject leaders to demonstrate how their leadership of the wider curriculum improves pupils' achievement over time
 - ensuring that all subject leaders include pupil outcomes and success criteria in their curriculum development plans
 - introducing effective systems that will clearly show just how much progress children make over time in their first year at school.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- Senior leaders have displayed focus and determination in order to transform and improve the school so rapidly since the previous inspection. The headteacher and governors have successfully created a culture of high expectations for staff and pupils. Everyone in the school shares their vision for pupils to be 'proud, unique and ambitious.' Pupils talk maturely about this motto and sing happily about it in their school song.
- The headteacher ensures that senior leaders monitor teaching regularly and accurately. Following lesson observations, senior leaders provide clear and detailed feedback to staff. This support has increased standards across the school. Teachers plan lessons carefully to meet the different needs of learners. They ask probing questions to challenge the most able and give concise explanations that help pupils understand new information. For example, in history, Year 6 pupils were able to discuss and debate the causes of the Holocaust in some depth following a resourceful demonstration and explanation by teachers.
- Leaders with responsibility for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities have trained staff efficiently and these pupils are now very well supported in all classes. Parents are regularly involved in discussions about their child's needs and if any pupil begins to fall behind, they are provided, swiftly, with the help needed to catch up. These pupils achieve well and are now making strong progress.
- Senior staff who lead developments in English and mathematics have raised achievement in these subjects. However, many of the school's middle leaders who have responsibility for other subjects are new to their posts. Governors have recognised this as an area to improve and have allocated training to support development here. In some subjects, leaders do not show how they have improved pupils' achievement over time. Their plans to develop subjects do not show clearly how pupils' outcomes will be improved. In some subjects, middle leaders do not explain clearly enough how the success of their actions will be measured.
- Governors make sure that the pupil premium funding is used effectively. For example, the breakfast club is provided free of charge and encourages pupils to attend school regularly and on time. Leaders have therefore been successful at improving attendance for all pupils, including disadvantaged groups. Teachers track the progress of disadvantaged pupils closely to offer any additional support that may be needed. Consequently, by the end of key stage 2, differences between disadvantaged pupils and other pupils nationally have diminished, especially in mathematics and writing.
- The curriculum is broad and balanced. Pupils have many opportunities to develop their reading, writing and mathematics skills in other subjects of the curriculum. The school employs specialist staff to run some lessons, such as in science and French. As such, pupils are taught by staff with high levels of expertise. Pupils in key stage 1 enjoyed designing waterproof homes for hedgehogs using their scientific knowledge about materials. Meanwhile, key stage 2 pupils were fascinated by their close study of a pig's heart in their biology lessons. Pupils talked to inspectors enthusiastically about the after-school and lunchtime clubs that are available and many were keen to explain how much they appreciated opportunities to learn how to play musical instruments.

- Senior leaders plan assemblies carefully to make sure that pupils develop a good understanding of British values. Together with assemblies, specialist events also promote pupils' understanding of tolerance and respect for others. For example, during their Fairtrade Fortnight pupils gained empathy for workers in other countries. Pupils are taught to challenge prejudice in their activities linked to 'Show racism the red card'. These and other opportunities help pupils prepare for life in modern Britain.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. It is threaded through the curriculum and linked to themes studied by each class. In Year 3 pupils learn about festivals of light that are celebrated around the world in different ways. All pupils recently took part in World Homeless Week, where they explored, sensibly, the social and moral issues faced by charities that run clothes and/or food banks. During the inspection, key stage 2 pupils took part in a local commemoration of remembrance. In discussions pupils gave a clear explanation of why they thought it was important to honour the sacrifices made by previous generations.
- The school's procedures for checking on the performance of staff are closely linked to improving pupils' progress and attainment. Teachers have worked together to observe one another and share the best practice they observe. The local authority has been supportive in this respect, providing useful information to validate senior leaders' judgements. They agree that the school is now providing a good education for pupils.
- Governors check that funding allocated for primary physical education and sport is used effectively. Meticulous records are maintained to demonstrate how well this money increases pupils' participation in many different sports. Staff use this funding creatively to offer pupils some exciting activities and new opportunities, such as attending a surf school at the local beach. Visiting coaches help staff develop their teaching skills in physical education. Governors have therefore ensured that sports funding provides a strong legacy for the future.

Governance of the school

- Governors have a highly professional approach to leading, monitoring and evaluating the school's work. They provide an excellent focus on continual improvement for everyone in the school and share an unwavering ambition to lead the school to become outstanding. Their drive and determination has helped the school to secure rapid improvements in a short space of time.
- New governors are recruited to specific roles within the school so that a wide skills base is available to support improvements. Governors have a wealth of knowledge and experience with which to challenge and assist senior leaders. Financial management is a particular strength and governors insist that value for money is at the heart of decisions. Governors make sure that any specialised funding, such as the pupil premium and sports funding has a direct impact on improving outcomes for pupils.
- Governors hold teachers firmly to account by linking pay progression to performance. They have developed a fair and robust system and take assertive action to challenge poor performance.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Leaders who look after pupils' emotional well-being provide very effective support for

pupils who are vulnerable and at risk. Staff work closely and swiftly with external professionals such as counsellors and therapists, ensuring that children receive any additional assistance they may need.

- Staff are trained regularly and follow all of the school's safeguarding procedures efficiently. The board of governors includes members with specific expertise in the area of safeguarding who make sure that safer recruitment and vetting procedures are followed assiduously and carefully recorded.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Teaching is consistently good over time and has improved since the previous inspection. Teachers in the school who are new to the profession and those who are recently qualified are supported very effectively to reflect on and improve their skills.
- Within lessons, teachers ask probing questions to check if pupils have understood new information. Staff also phrase questions carefully in order to challenge the most able pupils and by doing so encourage them to respond in greater depth.
- Mathematics teaching is good and now leads to good rates of progress. This is because teachers observe and assess pupils' skills closely and plan subsequent lessons thoughtfully. For example, Year 5 teachers noticed that pupils had not fully understood how to add improper fractions correctly. Pupils were then provided with useful apparatus to help them better understand the concepts and procedures involved. As a result of this perceptive assessment by staff, pupils were helped to make progress rapidly. Across the school and in most subjects staff pick up on pupils' misconceptions effectively so that any dips in progress are quickly identified and eradicated. In key stage 1 staff stepped in promptly to rephrase a mathematics problem when they noticed that pupils had misunderstood and it was slowing the pace of learning. Subsequently, all pupils made swift progress by using their division skills to solve problems and the most able group was particularly well challenged.
- Staff teach writing well. Teachers use the school's assessment procedures successfully in lessons to ensure that pupils make good progress in writing. Pupils are encouraged to write using imagination and expression across all areas of the curriculum. A good example of this was seen in Year 4 books, where pupils wrote about the ancient Egyptians using interesting vocabulary to engage and entertain their readers.
- Phonics teaching is good. Pupils decode new words confidently using the phonics skills they have been taught. Teachers allocate reading books to pupils that offer just the right amount of challenge to improve skills further while sustaining pupils' interest.
- Pupils enjoy reading for pleasure at home and at school. Older pupils said that they read more frequently now because of the school's 'drop everything and read' sessions. When teachers ask pupils questions about the meaning of what they have read, pupils can give thoughtful answers orally. However, pupils are not yet as skilled at explaining their answers to reading comprehension questions in writing. At times, pupils' written answers to comprehension questions do not fully explain how much they do actually understand about the texts read.
- In English, pupils' spelling and handwriting skills are not as strong as other aspects of their work. Senior leaders have noted this and introduced new procedures to help

teachers develop these basic skills. However, changes are very recent and have not yet improved progress in spelling and handwriting.

- The teaching of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is good. Staff observe and assess this group of pupils carefully and so understand their needs well. In classrooms, teachers plan activities skilfully so that this group of pupils can join in with the main class learning. Where necessary, additional sessions are also offered to provide this group with extra time and help to practise the basic skills they have not yet mastered. Because of this approach, pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities make strong progress and begin to catch up quickly from their different starting points.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils are proud of their school and explain that behaviour has improved considerably since new systems were introduced. They understand, for example, that good work and behaviour are rewarded with house points and think it fair that if anyone misbehaves they receive a warning and then a consequence.
- There is a calm, orderly and purposeful atmosphere in all areas of the school, including in the lunch hall and as pupils move around corridors. Pupils are polite and well-mannered, holding doors open and standing aside for others to walk through first.
- Pupils work and play together happily. Lessons begin promptly without any fuss and examples of low-level disruption are extremely rare.
- Parents agree that their children are safe and looked after within the school. Pupils too explain that they feel safe in school and are confident that they can talk to staff should they ever need help or assistance. They say that staff always respond quickly to deal with any incidents of bullying but agree that such events are very rare.
- Staff who hold a specific responsibility for pupils' personal development and welfare frequently run sessions to ensure that pupils know how to prevent bullying and teach pupils how to stay safe in different situations. Pupils were able to explain how to keep safe when using the internet, while crossing roads and when walking or riding on darker, winter evenings.
- Pupils enjoy their healthy lunches and understand how to keep themselves fit. In particular, younger pupils were able to explain the importance of good dental hygiene and how milk provided them with calcium to keep their teeth and bones strong.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils have positive attitudes to learning and work sensibly together at different activities. Relationships between staff and pupils are strong and pupils treat one another with high levels of respect.
- Pupils enjoy their lessons and are keen to share their answers and ideas in class. This was very evident in Years 5 and 6 where pupils answered questions about art and

history confidently and in depth. Pupils are attentive and focused so that their learning moves forward at a good pace in all subjects.

- Records of behaviour, including those which involve bullying and racist incidents, show that staff report such episodes carefully and in depth. All of these occurrences are dealt with promptly and effectively. Close analysis of behaviour incidents also shows that leaders have reduced misbehaviour over time.
- All staff share high expectations for pupils' behaviour. Teachers frequently notice the very best examples of good behaviour and point these out to pupils so that everyone is aware of the high standards expected. However, pupils are not yet as committed to improving their handwriting and presentation as they are to improving other aspects of their behaviour.
- Senior leaders have worked with parents to improve attendance since the last inspection and for most groups of pupils absence has decreased over time. Pupils' attendance overall is broadly average.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Standards have continued to improve over the past two years. Work in pupils' books and assessment information confirm that pupils make good progress across all year groups and in a range of subjects from their different starting points.
- A higher proportion of pupils now achieve the expected standard in the Year 1 phonics check because of further improvements in teaching since the previous inspection. At the end of key stage 1 in 2016, provisional results show good levels of achievement or above in reading, writing and mathematics for most groups of pupils.
- For Year 6 pupils, progress increased in reading, writing and mathematics in 2015 and then again in 2016. Pupils' progress from their lower-than-average starting points in key stage 1 increased dramatically by the end of key stage 2 in 2016. Provisional data shows overall pupil progress in key stage 2 to be in the highest 10% of schools nationally in 2016.
- At the time of the previous inspection, pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities did not make as much progress as other pupils with similar starting points. Leaders have improved provision for this group of pupils and inspection evidence shows that they now make very good progress over time.
- Different groups of pupils achieve well, including disadvantaged pupils. Funding is used effectively to provide additional support for disadvantaged pupils closely matched to their needs. As a result, disadvantaged pupils have made swift progress in all subjects and differences between their attainment and that of other pupils nationally has diminished. The most able disadvantaged pupils achieved particularly well in mathematics and writing in 2016 assessments.
- Pupils did not make as much progress in reading at the end of key stage 2 last year as that seen in writing and mathematics. Leaders have unpicked the reasons for the slower progress in reading by analysing pupils' skills carefully. They have recognised that pupils are not as competent as they could be at writing clear, yet detailed, answers to reading comprehension questions.

- During the inspection evidence showed that despite the 2016 key stage 2 reading test outcomes, the majority of pupils across the school enjoy reading and read regularly at home and at school. Pupils read to inspectors with fluency and in discussion understood the meaning of different texts. Pupils used their phonic skills effectively to work out new and unfamiliar words and talked freely about their favourite authors.
- Pupils' attainment in spelling was lower than other aspects of their English skills at the end of key stage 2 in 2016. Leaders have responded to this quickly by introducing new procedures to improve the teaching and assessment of spelling skills.
- The most able pupils make good progress overall, especially in mathematics. This is because teachers set challenging work for this group of pupils in mathematics and provide many opportunities for them to apply their reasoning skills in problem-solving activities.

Early years provision

Good

- Since the previous inspection, children's progress and attainment have increased in the early years. The vast majority make at least good progress by the end of Reception and the proportion of children who reach a good level of development is broadly in line with the national average. Children are well prepared for the beginning of Year 1.
- Parents are very positive about the early years unit. They comment that children love coming to school and settle in quickly. Staff offer many opportunities for parents to become involved in their child's learning such as painting activities which are set up at the entrance to Nursery in the mornings for parents to complete alongside their children.
- Teaching is consistently good in the early years. Staff know the children well and are aware of their individual needs. Teachers use assessment information effectively to plan interesting activities that engage children. As a result, children become confident learners. They show increasing independence when tackling reading, writing and mathematics problems.
- Many children begin Nursery or Reception with speech and language skills below those that are typical for their age. Senior leaders recognised this was a major barrier to future learning. A specialist in speech and language development was therefore employed to assess each child's communication skills on entry to the school. This expert has helped teachers to plan activities that quicken children's progress.
- Staff are skilled at observing children's play and intervene at just the right moment to move learning forward. They introduce new vocabulary gradually so that children can then use it in their own play. For example, in drama, staff took on the role of police officers investigating a break-in at the three bears' house. They used words such as 'investigate', 'clues' and 'mystery' which children later copied correctly within their own role play games.
- Outdoor learning was limited during the inspection because of building works in the Reception garden. This did not prevent teachers from using the outdoor yard to develop children's mathematics skills. Staff challenged the most able children to find out who could throw a beanbag the furthest. Children solved this problem by using their previous knowledge about length, applying their measuring skills accurately and then comparing the distances of each throw.

- Staff teach phonics skills very effectively in the early years. Reception children learn how to match letters to sounds and can identify the sounds at the beginning and end of words. The most able children, including those who are disadvantaged, make good progress and compose simple sentences by using and applying their new phonics learning.
- Behaviour is excellent in the Nursery and Reception classes because staff have consistently high expectations. Children listen attentively to their teachers and give polite responses when questioned. Older children work and play together happily in pairs and small groups. They help each other by sharing and taking turns.
- In the Reception classes, children's books and learning journals show good progress over time for individuals and groups of children, especially with writing skills. For example, some children who had just started writing their own names correctly at the start of the year were soon able to write one or two sentences independently.
- Reception staff use very effective systems and procedures to show children's progress over time in many areas of learning. The early years leader uses these records to check that teachers' assessments are accurate. Similar systems are not yet embedded quite as securely for the younger children.
- Children participate in many interesting visits offsite such as walks in the local park and trips to the library and church nearby. Staff have developed interesting homework projects for children in the early years to complete with their families. These additional activities have helped children gain a better understanding of the wider world.
- In Reception, records of children's achievement show good improvements for children who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. Staff work closely with other agencies to ensure that children receive the additional help they need.
- Vigilant and caring staff look after children well, making sure they are kept safe and healthy during their time in the early years unit. Children also learn to look after one another. For example, they help each other to put on coats, gloves and wellington boots to keep warm and dry before going outside.

School details

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| Unique reference number | 139124 |
| Local authority | South Tyneside |
| Inspection number | 10019758 |

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

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| Type of school | Primary |
| School category | Academy |
| Age range of pupils | 3 to 11 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number of pupils on the school roll | 260 |
| Appropriate authority | Academy trust |
| Chair | Mrs Christine S Smith |
| Headteacher | Mr Michael McCarthy |
| Telephone number | 01914 552865 |
| Website | www.ridgewayprimaryacademy.co.uk |
| Email address | info@ridgeway.s-tyneside.sch.uk |
| Date of previous inspection | 6–7 November 2014 |

Information about this school

- This school is smaller than the average size for a primary school, but numbers have increased since the previous inspection.
- The vast majority of pupils are White British and speak English as their first language.
- The proportion of pupils who are disadvantaged is well above average compared to other schools nationally.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is above average and so too is the proportion of pupils with an education, health and care plan or a statement of special educational needs.
- The school meets the government's floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in English and mathematics.
- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.

- The school complies with Department for Education guidance on what academies should publish.
- Most children in the Nursery attend part time for at least 15 hours per week. Some parents choose to purchase additional hours of provision for their children to attend Nursery for longer than 15 hours. This provision is purchased on a flexible basis to meet parents' needs. Children in the Reception Year attend full time.
- The board of governors makes provision for a daily breakfast club and the school runs several after-school activities.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors visited a range of lessons, including conducting joint observations with the headteacher and other senior leaders. In addition, one inspector visited a whole-school assembly.
- Inspectors observed and spoke with pupils during lessons, at playtimes and lunchtimes. They also met formally with a group of pupils from the school council.
- Inspectors reviewed pupil progress and attainment information provided by senior leaders and checked anonymised information about the performance of teachers.
- Inspectors looked at behaviour records and documents linked to safeguarding as well as additional information about the organisation and work of the board of governors.
- Inspectors listened to pupils read and observed learning that took place in small groups outside of lessons.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, senior leaders, class teachers and members of the board of governors. A conversation was also held with a representative from the local authority.
- Inspectors considered the views of 34 parents who responded through Parent View (Ofsted's online questionnaire for parents). Inspectors also held informal discussions with parents at the beginning and end of the school day.

Inspection team

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Ofsted Inspector

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