

Ridgeway High School

Noctorum Avenue, Noctorum, Prenton, Merseyside CH43 9EB

Inspection dates

21–22 November 2017

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- Leaders and governors have failed to prevent a decline in the overall quality of education.
- Leaders do not routinely check the effectiveness of their actions to improve outcomes for pupils.
- Leaders and governors have been slow to address a legacy of underachievement in English. Consequently, pupils do not make good progress.
- Leaders do not routinely check and review how effectively they use the pupil premium funding. Outcomes for these pupils are not yet good.
- Some teachers do not use the information that they have about their pupils to inform future learning and progress.
- Leaders' system for assessing teachers' performance is not rigorous enough.
- Some teachers do not routinely plan lessons that stretch and challenge pupils. For example, the most able pupils do not make the progress of which they are capable.
- Occasionally, some teachers' expectations of pupils' behaviour are still not high enough.
- Too many pupils, particularly disadvantaged pupils, are regularly absent from school. This has a negative impact on pupils' progress.
- Leaders have detailed strategies in place to improve behaviour. However, the proportion of pupils that is excluded or temporarily excluded from school remains too high.

The school has the following strengths

- The headteacher has worked alongside the governing body to ensure a smooth transition to the new school building. This has started to transform the culture of the school.
- Pupils benefit from an improved programme of careers guidance. Almost all pupils progress onto further education, employment or training when they leave school.
- Pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities make good progress.
- Governors have a clear understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. They are committed to improving the progress made by pupils across the curriculum.
- Leaders have overhauled the school curriculum to improve outcomes for pupils. Pupils now benefit from a curriculum offer which is broad and balanced.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Strengthen leadership and management, by:
 - measuring the effectiveness of the pupil premium spending on disadvantaged pupils' outcomes
 - reviewing and evaluating the effectiveness of leaders' actions to improve outcomes for pupils, especially in English and for the disadvantaged pupils
 - monitoring teachers' performance with greater rigour.
- Further improve the effectiveness of teaching on pupils' learning and progress, by:
 - ensuring that teachers use the information that they have about their pupils to plan activities which challenge all pupils
 - ensuring that teachers have consistently high expectations of pupils' behaviour.
- Strengthen pupils' personal development, behaviour and welfare, by:
 - improving pupils' rates of attendance, particularly for disadvantaged pupils
 - reducing the number of pupils who are excluded or temporarily excluded from school
 - building on the strategies to improve behaviour in lessons so that it is consistently good
 - ensuring that pupils regulate their own behaviour outside of their lessons.

An external review of the school's use of the pupil premium should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- Since the last inspection, leaders and governors have failed to prevent a decline in outcomes for pupils. Although more recently leaders have begun to take effective action to improve the progress that pupils make, leaders recognise that they are on a journey of improvement. Leaders acknowledge that standards are not good enough.
- Leaders have been slow to secure improvements in English. In 2017, provisional information shows that pupils' progress in English remains well below the national average. Nevertheless, the subject leader has a clear plan to improve the quality of teaching. The success of this is emerging. For example, pupils make better progress in English at key stage 3. This is because of effective changes to the curriculum and some improvements in the quality of teaching.
- Leaders have overhauled a curriculum that was not fit for purpose. As a result, pupils benefit from a curriculum which is broad and balanced. For example, at key stage 3 pupils continue to study the full range of humanities subjects up to Year 9 to ensure breadth. At key stage 4, pupils benefit from the choice of an appropriate range of academic and vocational subjects.
- Instability in staffing has contributed significantly to the overall decline in standards across the school. However, following a number of recent appointments, governors and leaders demonstrate the capacity to tackle a legacy of underachievement. For example, there is evidence that current pupils make faster progress in subjects such as mathematics, modern foreign languages and humanities.
- Leadership and management is not yet good because the quality of teaching is inconsistent across the curriculum and within subjects. That said, the leadership of teaching and learning is improving. Leaders recognise the need to ensure that teachers have higher aspirations and expectations for their pupils. Current leaders have an accurate view of the strengths and weaknesses in teaching. As a result, staff at all levels are able to benefit from an improved programme of training as well as support from other local schools.
- Middle leadership is improving. Middle leaders feel well supported to make the changes required to improve learning and progress for pupils. Where subject leadership is strong, for example in mathematics, faster improvements to the quality of teaching mean that pupils' outcomes are improving at a faster pace.
- Leaders do not routinely hold teachers to account for the progress that their pupils make. The system to assess teachers' performance is not rigorous enough.
- Leaders have secured some improvements to disadvantaged pupils' progress. This is because leaders now have an accurate view of the barriers faced by disadvantaged pupils. However, leaders do not monitor and evaluate their use of the pupil premium funding sufficiently well. With the exception of improvements to the progress made by the most able disadvantaged pupils in mathematics, they are unclear about which strategies are the most effective. Leaders do not spend the pupil premium funding sufficiently well.
- Leaders do not systematically monitor the use of the Year 7 catch-up funding. As a

result, leaders are unsure about the success of their spending on pupils' progress. Pupils who enter the school below the expected level in English and mathematics do not catch up quickly enough. Leaders recognise that the curriculum for these pupils requires further development.

- Leaders use the additional funding that they receive for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities well. This is because the leader for SEN reviews the effectiveness of the additional support that these pupils receive against their progress.
- Leaders provide a wide range of opportunities for pupils to develop their social, moral, spiritual and cultural understanding. For example, pupils participate in range of extra-curricular activities, including the Duke of Edinburgh's Award. Leaders successfully embed British values through the 'learning for life' curriculum. For instance, pupils develop their knowledge of democracy through an intensive study day on voting.
- The headteacher has ensured a smooth transition to the new school. The new building has been the catalyst for change in the school's culture. Staff and pupils alike appreciate the new facilities and the building supports a positive climate for learning.

Governance of the school

- Governors have been effective in securing some improvements to the quality of education that the school provides. However, governors acknowledge that developments are still necessary, for example to pupils' progress and learning in English. They are aware of the challenges ahead and are resolute in ensuring that every child receives a good education.
- Historically, governors have not been able to hold leaders sufficiently to account. This is because the information that they received was sometimes inaccurate. More recently, the newly formed governing body has had the information that it needs to challenge leaders.
- Governors have an improved understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. For example, they have recently set up a pupil and parent engagement committee to address the issue of low attendance.
- Governors are determined to reduce the number of temporary exclusions from school. They have already put in place strategies to further improve the quality of support that pupils receive, particularly those pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Safeguarding procedures in the school are secure. Leaders and teachers fulfil their statutory duties effectively. Recruitment systems are strong. This ensures that only suitable people work in the school. The school's internet filtering systems are effective.
- The school's safeguarding policies comply with the latest statutory requirements. Staff training is up to date. Leaders and staff demonstrate a strong awareness of how to help pupils to stay safe in their local community.
- Leaders have created a well-established culture of safeguarding. Leaders follow up referrals with external agencies tenaciously. Leaders involve parents when appropriate.

The vast majority of parents feel that their child is safe in school.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- The quality of teaching and learning requires improvement because it is not consistently good across all subjects and year groups. Recent actions of leaders are helping pupils to catch up and make better progress following a legacy of poor-quality teaching.
- While some teachers plan lessons that help pupils to learn well, pupils do not always spend their time in lessons productively. This is because teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve are not always high enough. As a result, they do not routinely plan lessons that challenge pupils.
- Occasionally, teachers exude enthusiasm and secure subject knowledge. This leads to effective use of questions that extend learning and helps to reshape learning for those falling behind.
- Some teachers are applying the school's new assessment policy well. When used, pupils are able to improve their work, further their learning and deepen their understanding. Occasionally, teachers do not use assessment information to plan work to extend pupils' progress. Teachers' assessment of pupils' work is not consistently accurate and this leads to some mismatch between work and pupils' ability.
- While relationships between pupils and staff are generally positive, not all teachers expect and encourage pupils to work with positive attitudes. Some teachers do not follow procedures and they tolerate low-level disruption. As a result, pupils do not listen to the teacher or join in. This means they do not make as much progress as they should.
- Instability in staffing has had a negative effect on the quality of teaching since the last inspection, especially in English. Leaders have recently recruited a large number of good-quality teachers. This has reduced the school's reliance on temporary staff. This is leading to improved consistency in implementing school policies.
- Leaders provide parents with accurate information about how well their children are progressing. However, they do not always explain to parents what their children need to do to improve.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Requires improvement

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare requires improvement.
- Pupils have the opportunity to learn but they sometimes choose not to do so. Work in pupils' books varies in quality. Not enough pupils take pride in their work. Presentation in pupils' books is sometimes poor and lacking in effort.
- The pupils who spoke to the inspectors say that they are confident in keeping themselves safe online because of what they learn at school. Generally, pupils say that

they feel safe in school. There is always someone who they can talk to if they are worried or have a problem. Nevertheless, some pupils, particularly those in younger year groups, said that disorderly behaviour on stairwells makes them feel unsafe.

- Although incidents of bullying are rare, a very small number of pupils and parents do not have the confidence that staff will deal with bullying effectively.
- Pupils say that staff deal with racist and homophobic incidents quickly and successfully. As a result, the use of prejudicial language is rare.
- The school draws effectively on a number of external providers to add to its enrichment programme. This helps to develop pupils' physical and emotional well-being. Pupils are encouraged to experience other cultures through visits to local places of worship as well as hosting lunches in the school for elderly residents of the local community.
- Leaders monitor closely the well-being of pupils who attend alternative provision.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement.
- Too many pupils are regularly absent from school. Leaders acknowledge that this is an area that requires significant improvement. Leaders commissioned an external review of attendance. Following this review there is now a whole-school approach to improving pupils' attendance. Leadership of this area has also strengthened considerably.
- Permanent and temporary exclusions are too high. They are well above the national average. Leaders now have a clear policy in place to improve behaviour further, including a revised list of appropriate sanctions. The success of this policy is starting to emerge.
- Some pupils are not considerate of one another. In the absence of staff supervision, pupils report that behaviour is not always calm and orderly during lesson changeovers. This is a particular concern on the stairs, between lessons and at social times.
- In most lessons pupils' behaviour does not disrupt learning. However, in a small number of lessons pupils talk over teachers' instructions and shout out. This slows learning and progress.
- Where behaviour is stronger, teachers' routines are well established and they forge positive relationships with pupils.
- The school communicates well with alternative providers about checking pupils' attendance and punctuality and communicates this information to parents. As a result, pupils who attend alternative provision make reasonable progress in their learning.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- Since the last inspection, the progress made by pupils declined. In 2015 and 2016, the performance of Year 11 pupils in public examinations was below the government's current floor standard and the school met the definition of a coasting school.
- In 2016, headline figures showed that pupils made insufficient progress in many of their subjects by the end of key stage 4. Pupils' progress overall was in the bottom 10% of all schools nationally. It was equally poor in mathematics and in English.
- Since moving to the new school building, the refocusing of attention on progress and teaching changes are starting to have a positive effect on outcomes. Provisional information for 2017 shows that the progress made by pupils at the end of key stage 4 has improved across a range of subjects. For example, pupils' progress has improved in modern foreign languages and humanities.
- In 2017, provisional information shows an improvement in mathematics and pupils now make similar progress to other pupils nationally. This is due to the strong leadership of mathematics and improved teaching. Teachers use accurate assessment information effectively to inform their planning.
- Leaders' improvements to teaching and learning, coupled with a more stable staffing structure, are also helping to secure better progress for current pupils, especially in key stage 3. Work scrutiny and observations of pupils' learning and progress in lessons confirm this overall improvement. The school's own assessment information also shows that current pupils now make enough progress to reach the level expected for their age. Nevertheless, there is still much work to do to ensure that pupils make consistently good progress.
- Leaders recognise that there are still some pupils, particularly in Year 11, who need to make more rapid progress to catch up because of a legacy of weak teaching. For example, the progress made by pupils in English at key stage 4 remains fragile.
- Disadvantaged pupils' progress is improving, particularly in mathematics. However, there is still some way to go to ensure that they make similar progress to other pupils nationally with the same starting points.
- Pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities make more rapid progress. Leaders regularly review the progress that these pupils make in order to provide extra support when needed.
- Starting in Year 8, there is a comprehensive programme to support pupils with their career choices. Following significant improvements in this area, almost all pupils continue to further education, employment or training when they leave school.

School details

Unique reference number	105097
Local authority	Wirral
Inspection number	10037763

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Foundation
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	694
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Michael McManus
Headteacher	Mr Tony Taylor
Telephone number	0151 6783322
Website	www.ridgewayhighschool.co.uk
Email address	schooloffice@ridgeway.wirral.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	3–4 July 2013

Information about this school

- This secondary school is smaller than average.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils is above the national average.
- The proportion of pupils who are from a minority ethnic group, or who speak English as an additional language, is lower than the national average.
- The proportion of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is higher than is seen nationally.
- A small number of pupils attend alternative provision at Cornerstones, The Vocational College, SGI Education and Beechwood Community Trust.
- Since the last inspection, the school has moved to a new building. The new building opened in September 2017.
- A new chair of the governing body was appointed in July 2017. The governing body has since been restructured.

- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- In 2016, the school did not meet the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' progress and attainment by the end of Year 11. The school meets the Department for Education's definition of a coasting school based on key stage 4 academic performance results in 2016.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed learning across a range of year groups in different subjects. Inspectors undertook some of these observations jointly with senior leaders.
- Inspectors listened to a group of Year 8 pupils read.
- Inspectors met with groups of pupils from different year groups, both formally and informally, to gather their views on the school.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, other senior leaders, middle leaders, teachers, teaching assistants and representatives from the governing body. Inspectors also spoke with a representative from the local authority and the school's improvement partner.
- Inspectors observed pupils during lessons, at breaktimes, at lunchtimes, in between lessons, during assemblies, during form time and at the beginning and end of the school day.
- Inspectors looked at pupils' work during lessons. They also undertook a formal review of pupils' work jointly with senior and middle leaders.
- Inspectors scrutinised a wide range of documentation that included: information about current pupils' progress; the school's self-evaluation and improvement plan; minutes of meetings of the governing body; records relating to teaching and learning; documentation pertaining to pupils' attendance; behaviour and exclusion records and a range of documentation relating to the safeguarding of pupils.
- Inspectors took account of the 33 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View. Inspectors also considered 26 responses to Ofsted's free-text service. Inspectors also reviewed the 43 responses to Ofsted's staff questionnaire. There were no responses to Ofsted's online pupil questionnaire.

Inspection team

Emma Gregory, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
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Craig Yates	Ofsted Inspector

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In the report, 'disadvantaged pupils' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route. www.gov.uk/pupil-premium-information-for-schools-and-alternative-provision-settings.

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