

Ridgewood High School

Park Road West, Wollaston, Stourbridge, West Midlands DY8 3NQ

Inspection dates

27–28 February 2018

Overall effectiveness	Inadequate
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Inadequate
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Inadequate
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Inadequate
Outcomes for pupils	Inadequate
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an inadequate school

- Leaders, including governors and the King Edward's and Halesowen Colleges' Academy Trust (KEHCAT), have not taken effective action to improve teaching or outcomes for pupils in the school.
- Pupils across the school, including those who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities and disadvantaged pupils, make exceptionally slow progress. This is in a range of subjects including English, mathematics, science and French.
- School leaders have not used the pupil premium funding well to support disadvantaged pupils. Leaders do not systematically check the impact of strategies being used.
- The teaching of science and French is ineffective. Most pupils underachieve in these subjects as a result.
- There is too much variability in the quality of teaching, especially in teachers' expectations of pupils.
- Attendance has declined over recent years, particularly for disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities.
- Arrangements for safeguarding pupils are ineffective. Too many staff have not yet received training. Leaders have not done enough to ensure that all pupils understand the risks posed by people with extreme views.
- Too many lessons are disrupted by low-level poor behaviour that is not challenged. Some teachers do not apply the school's behaviour policy.
- Many school leaders are new in post, inexperienced or ineffective and lack the capacity to drive sustained improvement in their areas of responsibility.

The school has the following strengths

- The new and capable headteacher, who joined in January, has the confidence of staff and governors. She has brought stability to the school. Under her leadership, there are early signs of improvement.
- The support from Stour Vale Academy Trust (SVAT) is beginning to bring about improvement in English and mathematics.

Full report

In accordance with section 44(1) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires special measures because it is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management by:
 - setting precise criteria to judge the success of school improvement plans, including the pupil premium strategy, so that leaders and governors can identify quickly when their policies and actions are not having the intended impact
 - securing effective senior leadership and the leadership of all subject areas
 - improving governance, so that school leaders are held rigorously to account for pupils' progress and for the spending of targeted funding, including pupil premium and Year 7 catch-up funding
 - strengthening the curriculum to ensure that it develops pupils' deep understanding of the topics being studied.
- Improve teaching across the school, but particularly in science and French, so that all groups of pupils, especially disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities, make consistently good progress by ensuring that:
 - teachers' assessments are accurate and used effectively to plan learning
 - teachers have consistently high expectations and plan lessons where learning is engaging and effective, and prepares pupils for the new and more demanding GCSEs
 - teachers deal with low-level disruption more effectively
 - teachers use information about pupils' special educational needs to ensure that teaching meets their needs
 - there is greater awareness of strategies to overcome barriers in learning for disadvantaged pupils in order to plan activities that help them to learn.
- Raise standards in pupils' personal development, behaviour and welfare by:
 - improving attendance, especially of disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities
 - further developing the behaviour system to ensure that staff use it consistently and effectively within lessons
 - ensuring that all staff receive statutory safeguarding training
 - implementing a coordinated plan for teaching personal, health, social, citizenship and economic (PHSCE) education including the dangers presented by those with extreme views.

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

An external review of governance should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management might be improved.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Inadequate

- KEHCAT recognise that they have not provided the support required and that this has contributed to declining standards. Directors at KEHCAT have since formally requested to join another multi-academy trust (MAT) and this has been approved by the regional schools commissioner.
- Since the last inspection, leaders have not effectively secured positive outcomes for pupils. The school has been negatively affected by interim appointments in leadership. A new substantive headteacher took up post in January 2018. Her energy, ambition and drive have galvanised staff and governors. Staff speak highly of the impact she has already had on morale. She is fully aware of the challenges she faces, including the need to urgently raise standards as they currently are unacceptably low.
- Senior and middle leaders' monitoring has not been sufficiently rigorous and consistent. As a result, they have not tackled weaknesses in teaching, assessment and behaviour. Some existing leaders remain defensive of previous performance. Furthermore, some statements on the school's website, and in self-evaluation, regarding outcomes are factually incorrect and misleading. There is, currently, a reliance on external support to support the headteacher in securing whole-school change.
- Subject and pastoral leaders form enthusiastic teams, inspired by the new appointment of the new headteacher. Some, but not all, are capable, keen and ambitious to support the school's future development. However, targeted leadership support and evolving school improvement strategies are in their very early stages. The incoming trust and new headteacher are honest in their reviews of the school. They recognise that there is much to do in order to strengthen leadership within the school.
- Leaders have underestimated the impact that low-level disruption is having on teaching and learning in the school. Poor behaviour often goes unchallenged. There is not close monitoring of how the school's behaviour management and assessment policies are being applied.
- At all levels, insufficient focus is placed on improving the performance of disadvantaged pupils. Leaders do not carefully evaluate the impact of pupil premium funded activities, so they do not know which have been successful and which need to be amended or discarded. The pupil premium strategy is weak. It is focused too much on actions and not enough emphasis is given to impact.
- Senior leaders do not routinely analyse the progress, behaviour and attendance of disadvantaged pupils. In key stage 3, particularly, many teachers are unaware of how well disadvantaged pupils are currently progressing in their subject. This is because assessment systems are not yet fully developed. Leaders' efforts to improve the attendance of disadvantaged pupils have not been successful because there is a lack of an overall strategy.
- The school's curriculum provides an appropriate range of subjects at both key stages. The headteacher recognises, however, that providing breadth and balance does not automatically mean that the curriculum is meeting the needs of all pupils and this is borne out in outcomes. In 2017, the proportion of pupils who were entered for the

EBacc was above the national average but the proportion who achieved it was well below national averages. Currently, leaders' work to develop an effective curriculum is undermined by weak teaching in some subjects. School leaders are set to launch a new curriculum from September 2018 in order to better meet the needs of current cohorts of pupils and to prepare them more fully for further education.

- The use of Year 7 literacy and numeracy catch-up funding is not monitored effectively. This area of the school's work has recently been placed under new leadership and is in a state of change although the planning is currently in the form of intended actions with little evidence of intended impact. The headteacher is very clear about the importance of this work, given the school's current profile, and is investing more than the ring-fenced income to support this work.
- Parents hold mixed views about the school's performance. Of those who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, three fifths would recommend the school to other parents, but two fifths would not. Approximately two thirds of respondents were happy with teaching but a little over half who responded are positive about leadership and behaviour.
- A wide range of extra-curricular activities supplement the formal taught curriculum. However, leaders do not yet analyse uptake in these activities and are, therefore, unable to analyse the impact that this enrichment is having on pupils' development. Pupils told inspectors that they value the extra-curricular activities which include a strong student-voice programme and a range of arts, sport and musical opportunities. Project Gambia provides pupils with extensive opportunities to develop citizenship.
- Inspectors strongly recommend that the school should not employ newly qualified teachers in science and French.

Governance of the school

- Over recent years, governors, including the directors and trustees of KEHCAT, have failed to hold leaders to account for the school's performance and therefore its decline.
- On her appointment, the new chief executive officer of KEHCAT recognised that they did not have the capacity to support the school and approached another MAT with a view to transferring responsibilities. Unfortunately, previous failings of the trust mean that too many pupils have underachieved since the school converted to academy status. Insufficient support has been given to the local governing body.
- Governors do not have a confident understanding of externally published data about the school's performance and have not sought the independent support required to be able to investigate the information effectively. They rely too heavily on leaders to provide them with an analysis of performance data and this has not always given them an accurate picture of outcomes for pupils. Challenge has, therefore, not been effective.
- Governors have not carried out their statutory responsibilities in regard to keeping a clear oversight of the information published on the school's website. The school's website fails to meet statutory requirements regarding pupil premium spend and governance. They do not routinely check that all staff receive the relevant training regarding safeguarding.

- Governors, including directors at KEHCAT, do not ensure that additional funding, including the pupil premium and Year 7 literacy and numeracy catch-up premium, is used effectively. They are, however, acutely aware that outcomes for disadvantaged pupils are weak.
- The governing body now has a clear understanding of the school's many weaknesses. They are under no illusion as to the extent of improvement needed before the school is offering an acceptable standard of education to its pupils.
- Governors care deeply about the school. They recognise the urgent need for improvement and have supported the directors' decision to move to a different multi-academy trust. They recognise that this will enable school leaders to benefit from working alongside more schools and access to a greater range of expertise.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are not effective.
- Arrangements for the training of staff are not robust or timely. Too many staff are yet to receive their statutory safeguarding training.
- Attendance is low and declining, particularly for disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities. The welfare and attendance of children looked after is not routinely monitored.
- Many, but not all, pupils are not aware of the potential threat from people who hold radical or extreme views. School leaders told inspectors of the priority being given to Dudley around the 'Prevent' duty and how appropriate training has been given to some staff. However, this has not ensured that all pupils are able to keep themselves safe in this area and not all staff have received relevant training. The vast majority of pupils told inspectors that they felt safe in school. There are, however, potential risks of which they are not aware.
- Safeguarding policies are up to date and fit for purpose. However, at the start of the inspection, the school's central register of staff checks was incomplete and did not include regular visitors from either of the MATs attached to the school. This was corrected during the inspection.
- Leaders make appropriate referrals to external agencies and keep these files well.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Inadequate

- Teaching, learning and assessment are inadequate. As a result, large numbers of pupils are significantly underachieving in English, mathematics, science and French, including disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities.
- Teaching is particularly weak in science and French.
- Teachers' expectations are not high enough. Inspectors saw many books containing poorly presented or incomplete work, particularly in science. Teachers do not routinely use assessment information about what pupils know and already can do when planning lessons. As a result, activities can be too easy and pupils are not challenged.
- Some teachers do not have high expectations of pupils' behaviour. They fail to

challenge low-level disruption from some pupils, and this affects the learning and enjoyment of the rest of the class.

- The vast majority of teaching in science and French does not develop pupils' deep understanding of the subject. In these subjects, teaching does not challenge pupils to think and work is pitched towards the lower end of the ability range. Pupils do not know how well they are doing or how to improve. In science, there is a wide variety of ability ranges within sets. The rationale behind this is not clear, although it appeared that sets are determined by pupils' attitude and behaviour rather than ability. This means that higher-ability pupils in lower sets do not access challenging work. These pupils, therefore, underachieve.
- The quality of assessment used to inform planning is variable. This is because strategies that ensure that assessment information is accurate or effective have not been fully established. Assessment information is strongest in Year 11 where the new headteacher, and the supporting MAT, have started to introduce more effective strategies, including moderation across other schools. New systems are being introduced but there is no evidence, at this point, of how this system is being used. Consequently, leaders and teachers do not have a clear overview of how groups of pupils are currently making progress across most year groups.
- The teaching of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is poor. This is because teachers do not have access to information about preferred strategies or, where they do, are not using this information effectively when planning lessons. Consequently, progress for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is particularly slow. A new leader of special educational needs is in place who recognises what needs to be done to improve provision.
- School leaders employ several members of staff who assist in classrooms in order to support learning. These additional adults are not always used effectively. They are often unprepared for their role and therefore do not contribute to improving pupils' progress or behaviour. Some do too much for the pupils and don't allow pupils to develop their independence. Where additional adults do work effectively with the class teacher to support learning, pupils make progress. Inspectors saw more effective practice in mathematics where additional adults actively support pupils' learning and progress.
- The teaching of disadvantaged pupils is poor. When asked by inspectors to identify disadvantaged pupils, many teachers could not. There is limited evidence of teachers planning work to meet these pupils' needs.
- Teaching is improving in several subjects including English and mathematics. This is because of the early work of the headteacher and support provided by SVAT. There is some effective teaching in all subjects, including science. Inspectors saw particularly strong and effective practice in dance. This was characterised by good subject knowledge, strong relationships between staff and pupils, well-established routines, high expectations and probing questions that deepened pupils' understanding and ensured their good progress and behaviour.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Inadequate

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is inadequate.
- Most pupils are sensible and many do have pride in their school. A minority, however, demonstrate less mature attitudes. They are unable or unwilling to regulate their own behaviour in classrooms.
- Pupils told inspectors that they feel safe in school. Over three quarters of the parents who responded to Parent View agree. Pupils said that bullying is rare and that adults deal effectively with bullying. School leaders have recently introduced pupil ambassadors to support their work in this area. Pupils have a good understanding of how to stay safe online.
- The vast majority of staff who completed the inspection questionnaire agree that pupils are safe in school. However, where additional comments were given by staff, they cited behaviour as an issue for the school. Inspection evidence supports this.
- Project Gambia is a whole-school project that allows pupils to develop their citizenship and learn more about the other cultures. This year, 106 pupils and staff from a partnership of local schools and colleges are going to the Gambia, but much is done to also involve those who are not going. The project has high visibility around school through displays and many pupils speak positively about this enrichment activity. School leaders believe this provides a great opportunity for pupils to live the values that are learned in the classroom and, as such, contributes much to the development of the school community. Pupils spoken to agree.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is inadequate.
- Many pupils who spoke with inspectors said that behaviour was not good in some of their lessons. Behaviour is better in the top sets in key stage 4. Pupils link poor behaviour to teachers' inconsistent use of behaviour systems and to inexperienced or temporary teachers. Although half of parents who responded to Parent View believed that pupils were well behaved, over a third did not.
- Pupils' attendance has declined for two years. It is below the national average for secondary schools. The attendance of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities, and disadvantaged pupils, is consistently low and is in the lowest 10% of pupils nationally. Leaders were aware of the low attendance of these groups but felt it was improving. It is not. Leaders believe they know the reasons why so many pupils attend poorly and are able to describe procedures that are in place. However, there is not a whole-school strategy to improve attendance for these vulnerable groups. Actions taken are not routinely monitored by school leaders and, therefore, they are not aware which are working, and which are not.
- Persistent absence is above average for disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities. Although rates of persistent absence are declining, they are still in the highest 10% nationally. Not enough is being done by school leaders to address this

and therefore improvements are not rapid enough.

- The proportion of fixed-term exclusions is a little higher than the national average, but this is an improving picture over time. There has been a spike in the proportion of fixed-term exclusions since the arrival of the new headteacher as stricter behaviour expectations are established.
- Some pupils say that prejudicial, homophobic or racist language is used regularly by pupils in school. This is not supported by data provided by the school nor in inspection evidence gathered.
- Most pupils behave appropriately as they move around the school.

Outcomes for pupils

Inadequate

- Outcomes for pupils at the end of key stage 4 are inadequate and have declined considerably in recent years. The progress of pupils who left the school in 2017 was weak. The picture for the current cohort of Year 11 pupils shows little improvement.
- In 2017, pupils made particularly weak progress in most subjects, including English, mathematics, science and modern foreign languages. The quality of work over time seen in books, variability in teaching and assessment, low-level disruption in lessons, and declining pupil attendance do not support the school's current predictions shared with inspectors for results this summer. However, inspectors did see evidence of some progress when looking in pupils' books in English and mathematics that suggests there may be some improvement, albeit small, in the basics attainment measure.
- Disadvantaged pupils' progress was significantly below that of other pupils nationally in 2017 and also when compared with disadvantaged pupils nationally. This was also the case in the previous two years. Progress remains slow for current pupils. This is because the school does not use pupil premium funding effectively and the barriers to learning are not sufficiently understood or acted upon. Assessment practice does not yet allow rigour in the tracking of this group of pupils, particularly in key stage 3. Leaders have not yet ensured that outcomes for disadvantaged pupils are given sufficient priority. The pupil premium strategy for 2017/18 is not available on the school's website and had only been completed recently. Much of the strategy contains approaches that were employed in previous years that have proved unsuccessful.
- The progress of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities at the end of 2017 was weak and many of these pupils underachieve in almost all subjects. Teaching does not meet their needs. Strategies to improve teaching and outcomes for the current cohort were not evident during the inspection. A new leader has recently been appointed to oversee this area of the school's work.
- The most able pupils make slow progress in science and French. They make the best progress in humanities. Their progress is variable because work is not challenging enough.
- Recent data shows that the proportion of pupils in education, employment or training after Year 11 has been on an improving trend and is now above the national average. However, school leaders do not have a confident overview of the intended destinations of current pupils and much is left to an external provider. During the inspection, school leaders were not able to articulate any strategy that is being used to promote and

support aspiration. There are approximately seven pupils from last year's cohort who are still not in education, employment or training (NEET). School leaders said that this is because the external provider does not chase up issues quickly enough.

- The newly appointed headteacher has recognised the need for change and is clear that all current Year 11 pupils must have a destination. Consequently, she has ensured that all Year 11 pupils who have not yet secured a college place for 2018/19 are interviewed by a local provider. Processes have been established within school to ensure that no pupil slips through the net.

School details

Unique reference number	141712
Local authority	Dudley
Inspection number	10042877

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	787
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees, King Edward's and Halesowen Colleges' Multi Academy Trust
Chair	John Hodt
Headteacher	Rae Cope
Telephone number	01384 818445
Website	www.ridgewood.dudley.sch.uk/
Email address	info@ridgewood.dudley.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- The school does not meet requirements on the publication of information about pupil premium spending, Year 7 catch-up funding or governance on its website.
- The school does not comply with Department for Education guidance on what academies should publish about pupil premium spending, Year 7 catch-up funding or governance.
- The school joined the King Edward's and Halesowen Colleges' Trust (KEHCAT) in May 2015. There is a trust board, which undertakes the strategic governance for the school. There is a local governing body that has aspects of governance delegated to it.
- The proportion of pupils in receipt of pupil premium funding is broadly in line with the national average.
- The proportion of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities who are supported by the school is above the national average.

- The school uses a range of alternative providers to meet the needs of individual pupils. Generally, these are short-term placements in order to provide pupils with additional support.
- A new headteacher took up post on 1 January 2018. She was previously acting headteacher in a school within the incoming multi-academy trust.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors visited 46 parts of lessons across the curriculum and year groups. They also visited five tutor sessions. During visits to classrooms, inspectors looked at samples of pupils' work and spoke to pupils about what they were learning.
- Inspectors met with four focus groups made up of pupils from different year groups and with a range of different needs and abilities. Inspectors also spoke with many pupils in and around school and in lessons.
- Inspectors met with the chief executive officers of KEHCAT and SVAT. Inspectors also met with the chair and vice-chair of the governing body, members of the senior leadership team, middle leaders and teachers. Teachers gave their views through 45 responses to the online questionnaire.
- The views of parents were evaluated through the 105 responses to Parent View and the 96 responses to the Parent View free-text service. School leaders also provided inspectors with their own parent questionnaire responses.
- A large number of school documents were scrutinised by inspectors, including: school leaders' self-evaluation of the school's performance, the school development plan, minutes of governors' meetings, safeguarding folders, attendance and pupils' progress data.

Inspection team

Richard Gill, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Wendy Tomes	Ofsted Inspector
Stephen Byatt	Ofsted Inspector
Lois Kelly	Ofsted Inspector

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