

Inspection of a good school: Ridgeway School

Hill Rise, Kempston, Bedford, Bedfordshire MK42 7EB

Inspection dates:

6–7 November 2019

Outcome

Ridgeway School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils at Ridgeway have very particular complex learning, physical or medical needs. Staff work hard to make sure these needs do not stop the pupils from learning and having fun. The relationships between staff and pupils are based on mutual respect and trust. Therapists and staff work closely together to ensure that pupils' sensory and care needs are met. The way in which pupils are treated with dignity and respect is impressive.

Teachers expect the pupils to work hard. They encourage pupils to be as independent as possible, but also make sure they are safe. Staff provide a perfect balance between nurture, support and challenge. This helps pupils to do their very best.

Pupils told us that they enjoyed their lessons because teachers make them interesting. They particularly like the clubs they can choose to go to at lunchtimes and on Friday afternoons.

Pupils' behaviour is a strength of the school. Pupils and staff show genuine kindness towards each other. Pupils told us that bullying doesn't happen. Parents and carers and staff agree with them.

Parents are positive about the school. One parent told the inspectors, 'The whole school look out for each other. It is an absolute pleasure to be part of it.'

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

Governors and leaders want Ridgeway to successfully prepare pupils for the next stage in their education. They work hard to ensure that all pupils are as independent as possible, are confident to make choices and can communicate their needs.

Since his appointment, the headteacher and leaders have been working hard to improve the curriculum. They want it to be relevant and meaningful to all pupils.

Curriculum leaders choose to plan three distinct learning pathways that match pupils' different needs and abilities. Plans for mathematics, science and computing are in place and being used throughout the school. The learning pathways for other subjects will be in place later in the school year. Leaders know that these plans must identify what pupils need to learn and in what order so that pupils build on previous learning.

Leaders' chosen assessment programme helps teachers to identify any gaps in pupils' learning to make sure pupils make good progress. Teachers told inspectors that this has reduced their workload and, as a result, they feel supported by leaders.

The teaching of reading and communication is a priority for the school. Pupils develop a love of reading by listening to lots of different types of stories and rhymes. Pupils successfully use signs, pictures, technology or words to communicate their thoughts and ideas. Leaders know the programme for teaching phonics could be better. Staff have received training this term and the curriculum leader has plans to improve the teaching of reading further.

Routines are quickly established in the early years class so that children learn what is expected of them. Staff model the good use of spoken English and use signing and symbols well.

Teachers want pupils to be as independent as possible. Teachers plan pupils' personal development so that lessons build on their prior knowledge and skills. For example, in a cookery lesson, pupils were washing up the equipment they had used. They looked at the labels on cupboards to help them put things away in the right place. In the sixth form, students followed recipes to cook their own lunch.

Pupils' personal development is further enriched by many interesting activities and opportunities. The sixth-form students explained how they make and sell things at a market stall in the town. Inspectors saw examples of artwork and listened and watched pupils singing and signing. Pupils say they enjoy the trips organised for them during school time and at weekends. Pupils are interested in the world around them. The older pupils told inspectors that they are worried about the effect of climate change on the environment. They recently protested with placards outside a local shopping centre and gave leaflets out to passers-by explaining their concerns.

Leaders make sure that pupils are ready for the next stage in their education. Most of the pupils go on to college or training. They gain the skills and knowledge needed to become more independent and confident about themselves.

Governors share leaders' ambition for all pupils to succeed and achieve well. They visit the school regularly and provide effective support and challenge. Governors need to make sure the school's website is kept up to date so that it gives an accurate picture of the school's successful work.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

The culture of safeguarding is consistent with the caring ethos of the school. Governors and leaders have ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose.

Leaders and staff provide pupils with strong pastoral care. They know the pupils well and take their welfare very seriously. They understand the signs that might mean a pupil is at risk. Staff report any concerns promptly following the school's clear procedures. Leaders follow up concerns tenaciously and involve the appropriate external agencies where necessary.

Leaders have worked diligently to ensure the extra risks around pupils' medical and special educational needs and/or disabilities are well managed through very effective care plans.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Governors and leaders need to ensure that the three curriculum pathways they have chosen are effectively implemented in all subjects. Leaders need to ensure that curriculum plans build on pupils' past knowledge and prepare them well for the learning that is to come. It is clear from the actions that leaders have already taken that they are in the process of bringing this about.
- The development of communication skills and reading rightly remains a school priority. Leaders and staff are determined that all pupils will communicate and/or read fluently by the time they leave the school. Senior leaders need to ensure that teachers are supported well to achieve this, so that the teaching of phonics and reading is consistently strong throughout the school.
- Governors are supportive of the work of the school and meet all their statutory requirements. However, they need to ensure that the website is updated as soon as policies are updated so that parents have up-to-date information.

Background

When we have judged a school to be good we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains good. This is called a section 8 inspection of a good school or non-exempt outstanding school. We do not give graded judgements on a section 8 inspection. However, if we find some evidence that the school could now be better than good or that standards may be declining, then the next inspection will be a section 5 inspection. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the section 8 inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will convert the section 8 inspection to a section 5 inspection immediately.

This is the second section 8 inspection since we judged the school to be good in November 2012.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use Ofsted Parent View information when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

If you are not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

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.

School details

Unique reference number	109742
Local authority	Bedford
Inspection number	10110319
Type of school	All-through special
School category	Community special
Age range of pupils	2 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	76
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	12
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Karen Chase
Headteacher	Andrew Munday
Website	www.ridgewayschool.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	15 March 2016

Information about this school

- Ridgeway School is an all-age school, with pupils aged from two to 19 years. The school provides for pupils with physical disabilities and/or medical conditions and associated learning and communication difficulties. Admission to the school is through local authority referral.
- All pupils in the school have an education, health and care plan. Pupils enter with attainment that is significantly below that expected for their age.
- The proportion of pupils who are eligible for pupil premium funding is in line with the national average.
- The school does not use alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

- During this inspection, inspectors met with the headteacher, senior leaders and three groups of teachers who teach a range of ages and subjects. Discussions were held with the chair of the governing body and four other governors. The lead inspector also met with a representative from the local authority to discuss their work with the school. Meetings were also held with the designated lead for safeguarding and the member of staff who maintains the single central record.
- Inspectors visited lessons across the school with senior leaders and observed pupils at break- and lunchtimes. Inspectors talked to pupils about their work and what it was like to be a pupil at the school.
- Inspectors considered reading and communication, mathematics and music in depth during this inspection. This included: discussions with senior leaders, curriculum leaders and teachers; lesson visits; scrutiny of a range of pupils' work; listening to pupils read; and talking to them about the school and their work.
- The school's website was scrutinised along with a range of school documents including the school's own evaluation, improvement plans, and records about behaviour, safeguarding children and attendance.
- The inspectors considered the 12 responses made by parents to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, and the 12 responses to Ofsted's free-text system. Inspectors also spoke to some parents during the inspection. Inspectors also took account of the 58 responses to Ofsted's online staff questionnaire and the eight responses to Ofsted's online pupil questionnaire.

Inspection team

Lynda Walker, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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