

Inspection of Ridgewood High School

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

Inspection dates:

19–20 November 2019

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

The quality of education

Requires improvement

Behaviour and attitudes

Good

Personal development

Good

Leadership and management

Good

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection

Inadequate

What is it like to attend this school?

Ridgewood has improved beyond recognition since it was last inspected. The headteacher provides determined and principled leadership. Staff are proud to work at the school. They form a united team, committed to continued improvement.

Relationships are strong throughout the school. Pupils appreciate the support that members of staff provide. They trust staff to help them with any worries they have. Pupils are happy and feel safe in school. Bullying is rare, and staff deal well with any that does happen.

Many pupils told inspectors how much the school has improved. Almost all mentioned much better teaching and greatly improved behaviour. Pupils now behave well in lessons and throughout the day. They are friendly, polite and keen to learn.

In the past, the school did not plan pupils' learning well. This is now much better, but there remains room for improvement. For example, pupils do not spend enough time studying some subjects in key stage 3. Teaching has also improved considerably but needs to improve further. Pupils still do not remember what they have been taught as well as they could. For too many, their spoken and written English is not as good as it ought to be.

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

The quality of education provided by the school has improved considerably since it was last inspected. Pupils' learning is now organised well in almost all subjects. In the few subjects where this is still not the case, there has been marked improvement. Leaders have addressed most historical weaknesses in the curriculum, but some remain. Pupils do not spend enough time studying some subjects in key stage 3. This is the case in history and French. In these subjects, pupils do not learn as much as they should as a result. Limited teaching time for physical education (PE) means that pupils are less active than they could be.

Teaching has improved greatly. The school is fully staffed with specialist teachers. Teachers are enthusiasts for their subjects. They are keen to improve their practice and they value the training that leaders have given them. Some weaknesses remain, though. Teaching still does not ensure that pupils remember what they have been taught as well as it could. Pupils are not consistently encouraged to use correct English when they speak and write.

Pupils have very positive attitudes to learning. They behave well in class and are eager to learn. The school is calm and orderly at social times. Pupils are considerate, well-mannered and polite.

The school places great emphasis on helping pupils to develop as young people as well as achieving qualifications. All pupils have weekly personal, social, health,

careers and economic (PSHCE) education lessons. The PSHCE programme is organised and taught well. It helps pupils to understand how to keep themselves safe, about healthy relationships and what it means to be an active citizen in modern Britain. Careers education is a strength of the school.

There are many opportunities for pupils to develop leadership skills and to contribute to the school and wider community. Many take part in after-school sport. Pupils volunteer to be junior house leaders and safeguarding leaders. They take part in the national citizenship scheme and the Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme. A large number of pupils visit Africa each year as part of 'Project Gambia'.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities are supported well in school. Leaders give teachers helpful information about these pupils' needs. Teachers are using this information increasingly well when planning lessons. Teaching assistants provide effective extra help both in lessons and at other times.

The headteacher and senior leaders provide honest and principled leadership. Staff value the clear direction that leaders provide. Pupils understand and appreciate the difference the headteacher has made to their education.

The accelerated improvement board (AIB) and the local governing body (LGB) provide the school's governance. Together, these bodies provide good support and challenge to leaders. The Stour Vale Academy Trust (SVAT) has been instrumental in the school's recent improvement.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

The school has a sizeable and knowledgeable safeguarding team. They provide staff with regular and high-quality training. This ensures that staff are vigilant to the signs that pupils might need extra help. Leaders make sure that pupils get the support they need, when they need it. Links with outside agencies are strong and leaders make use of these organisations when appropriate.

All safeguarding policies and procedures are clear, well-understood and fit for purpose. The school keeps secure and detailed safeguarding records.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- When the school was inspected in February 2018, the school's curriculum had several significant weaknesses. These included pupils taking some GCSEs in Year 10 and others in Year 11. They did not achieve well. Since that time, leaders have invested considerable time and effort in addressing these weaknesses. They have been largely successful, although older pupils still have gaps in their knowledge because of the previously deficient curriculum. The curriculum still contains some

weaknesses. Pupils do not spend enough time studying some subjects, for example history and French during key stage 3. So, they do not acquire sufficient knowledge to prepare them well to begin GCSE courses in these subjects. Similarly, in PE, limited curriculum time adversely affects pupils' levels of physical activity. Leaders should ensure that pupils study the current broad range of subjects in sufficient depth during key stage 3 to prepare them for potential further study of those subjects.

- Teachers have begun to focus their efforts on helping pupils to remember more of what they have been taught. This is proving successful in some subjects, for example in English. However, this remains an inconsistent picture across subjects. Too often, pupils cannot recall important knowledge. This means they find it more difficult to learn new content. It is a key reason why pupils' achievement in GCSE examinations has been weak in recent years. Leaders should ensure that pupils routinely have to recall what they have been taught, so that remembering important knowledge becomes a habit for them.
- Pupils who join the school with particularly weak literacy skills are supported well. Their reading and writing improve quickly. However, for too many other pupils, teaching does not develop their speaking, reading and writing as well as it ought. Pupils are not expected to answer questions in full and precise sentences. They do not understand key vocabulary, both subject-specific and that in general usage. They lack confidence in constructing written pieces of work. Teachers do not always model correct spoken and written English. Leaders should ensure that the curriculum and how it is taught encourage pupils to become confident and proficient readers, speakers and writers of English.

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're 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	141712
Local authority	Dudley
Inspection number	10112326
Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	796
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair	Joanne Williams
Headteacher	Rae Cope
Website	http://www.ridgewood.dudley.sch.uk/
Date of previous inspection	27–28 February 2018

Information about this school

- The school joined SVAT on 1 May 2018.
- A small number of pupils study away from the school for part or all of the week at one of: the Black Country Wheels School, the Cherry Tree Learning Centre and Impact Independent School.

Information about this inspection

We carried out this inspection under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We deemed the inspection a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

In accordance with section 13(4) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the school no longer requires special measures.

- We met with the headteacher, the deputy headteacher and three assistant headteachers, one of whom is also the designated safeguarding lead. We met with the chief executive officer of SVAT and two members of the LGB. We held a telephone conversation with the chair of the AIB.
- We talked to many pupils about their learning and their attitudes to, and opinions about, school. We observed pupils at breaktime and lunchtime and as they moved

around the school. We visited morning tutor periods and an assembly.

- We scrutinised several documents, including those relating to safeguarding and child protection. We checked that the single central record contained all required information.
- As part of this inspection, we paid particular attention to English, science, history, PE, food technology and French. In these subjects, we met with curriculum leaders, visited lessons, scrutinised pupils' work and spoke with teachers and pupils.

Inspection team

Alun Williams, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Sukhbir Farar	Ofsted Inspector
Clare Considine	Ofsted Inspector
Janet Lewis	Ofsted Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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