

Inspection of an outstanding school: The Ridgeway School

14 Frensham Road, Farnham, Surrey GU9 8HB

Inspection dates:

4–5 February 2020

Outcome

The Ridgeway School continues to be an outstanding school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Ambition, determination and joy permeate The Ridgeway School. All who are part of it are in no doubt that pupils are valued for who they are and for who they can become. Pupils are happy here. Parents and carers are overwhelmingly positive about the school. Many wrote about staff who 'never give up' and describe the school as 'fantastic'. One parent commented, 'Our children are celebrated at every level.' Another wrote, 'I don't think a parent could ask for much more.'

Staff work closely with families to make sure that they know pupils well. Staff put pupils' welfare and well-being at the heart of all they do and work hard to keep them safe. While all agree that bullying does not really happen at the school, staff deal very well with any unkind behaviour.

Pupils enjoy the vast range of activities they do at school and are keen to attend. They behave extremely well and are, rightly, proud of their many successes. Staff do all they can to help pupils to communicate their views and ideas. They aim to do all they can to enable pupils to live happy and successful lives.

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

Leaders' high ambition for pupils is shared by all staff. Leaders and staff have constructed a curriculum that meets pupils' needs. They are determined that pupils should have access to a broad range of learning. To achieve this, they use the national curriculum subjects as vehicles to deliver the specialist curriculum that pupils need. This works exceptionally well. It means that the school's foundations of learning, 'communication and advocacy', 'independence and life skills' and 'social and emotional mental health' are brought to life. The 'thinking skills' curriculum underpins all learning across the school. It is well-considered and coherently planned and sequenced.

This approach means that pupils learn consistently well. Staff match learning activities to what pupils know and can do and what they need to know or do next. Pupils' behaviour and attitudes are excellent, and they achieve exceptionally well.

Reading and stories are part of the everyday life of the school. Pupils relish the stories that staff read to them. Work based around these texts is skilfully adjusted to support pupils' learning. Some pupils explore the sensory aspects of texts. Others use texts to develop their own reading skills. All enjoy and are motivated by the work. Pupils who read to inspectors showed delight in the well-chosen books they are working with.

Other subjects, such as physical education (PE) and science, are also well matched to pupils' needs. Staff provide a range of experiences for pupils and consider their sensory needs well. Pupils enjoy their music therapy and hydrotherapy sessions. Staff also support pupils to try different communication approaches and devices to help them to 'find their voice'.

Pupils benefit from a very wide range of activities that support their wider development. Staff make sure that there is something for everyone. Pupils enjoy trips and visits that help to develop their knowledge of the world. Staff also support them to build up to bigger challenges such as residential trips which develop pupils' independence and personal skills. Many take part in the National Citizen Service (NCS) every year. Impressively, almost 10% have achieved their bronze Duke of Edinburgh Award.

Students in the sixth form enjoy being at the 'college site'. They benefit from this step towards greater independence while still being part of the main school. Students are respectful and keen to do well. They show great perseverance with tasks, especially when rewarded by opportunities such as dancing to a George Ezra song! Students benefit from a range of work experience placements. Staff support them to take formal qualifications when appropriate.

Leaders ensure that staff are experts. They provide time for all staff to meet to review and refine their understanding of how pupils are doing and their approaches to teaching. Staff are passionate about the potential their work has for the pupils in their care. They appreciate the time that leaders provide for this review and evaluation. Staff feel valued and many spoke of the way leaders support them and watch out for their workload. Many are undertaking research and formal higher studies. They use their continuing learning well to benefit pupils. They often support other providers who visit to try to 'bottle' some of the ethos that makes The Ridgeway so special.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

All staff are keenly aware of pupils' potential vulnerabilities. Leaders ensure that staff knowledge of what to look for and how to respond to any worry is secure. They understand the needs of their pupils well. Safeguarding is routinely discussed and considered to make sure that it remains a priority for all.

Leaders responsible for safeguarding have ensured that all statutory requirements are met, including recruitment checks. They take swift and effective action when needed and work well with external agencies. They have engaged the services of an independent expert to provide ongoing scrutiny of their work.

Background

When we have judged a special school, pupil referral unit or maintained nursery school to be outstanding we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains outstanding. 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 first section 8 inspection since we judged the predecessor school, The Ridgeway Community School, to be outstanding on 5–6 June 2013.

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 the school and 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

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|---------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Unique reference number | 141843 |
| Local authority | Surrey |
| Inspection number | 10122235 |
| Type of school | Special |
| School category | Academy special converter |
| 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 | 108 |
| Of which, number on roll in the sixth form | 15 |
| Appropriate authority | Board of trustees |
| Chair of trust | Peter Brinsden |
| Headteacher | Darryl Morgan |
| Website | www.ridgeway.surrey.sch.uk |
| Date of previous inspection | Not previously inspected |

Information about this school

- The Ridgeway School converted to become an academy school on 1 April 2017. When its predecessor school, The Ridgeway Community School, was last inspected by Ofsted, it was judged to be outstanding.
- The school joined Weydon Multi Academy Trust in April 2017. The school has the same headteacher but there is a new deputy headteacher. Approximately half of the staff have changed since the predecessor school was inspected.
- The Ridgeway School is a special school which caters for pupils with severe and profound multiple learning difficulties. Many pupils also have a diagnosis of autism spectrum disorder. All pupils have education, health and care plans.
- The sixth form is run by the school in premises located at Farnham College.
- There were no children of nursery age on roll at the time of the inspection and a very small number of children aged four and five.

Information about this inspection

- We held meetings with the headteacher, deputy headteacher, the head of sixth form, subject leaders, teachers and support staff.
- I met with representatives from the local governing body, including the chair of the governing body. I also met with the chair of trustees and the chief executive officer of the multi-academy trust.
- We took account of the 32 responses by parents to Ofsted's Parent View, including 18 written responses.
- We considered the views of staff from conversations and the 65 responses to Ofsted's online staff survey.
- We evaluated the effectiveness of safeguarding by reviewing leaders' knowledge, recording and actions. This included looking at documentation, including the school's single central record. Inspectors met with the designated safeguarding lead and the home school link worker and spoke to pupils, staff and governors about this aspect of their work.
- We did deep dives into these subjects: reading and communication, PE and physical development, and science and thinking skills. This involved discussions with the leaders of each of these subjects and visits to all classes. We looked at pupils' documentation and work and spoke with some pupils about their learning and their school. We met with the teachers from the lessons visited.

Inspection team

Lucy English, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Simon Yates

Ofsted Inspector

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