

# Inspection of Ridgewood High School

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

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Inspection dates: 3 and 4 July 2023

## **Overall effectiveness**

**Good**

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The quality of education

**Good**

Behaviour and attitudes

**Good**

Personal development

**Good**

Leadership and management

**Good**

Previous inspection grade

Requires Improvement

## **What is it like to attend this school?**

Ridgewood is a caring, inclusive school where leaders strive to provide the best for their pupils. Leaders in the school have introduced a number of changes to improve provision, particularly with regard to the curriculum and behaviour. These are having a positive impact. Pupils feel happy in school. They are clear that there are strong support systems in place if they have a problem, so they feel safe.

Warm and respectful relationships are present between pupils and staff. Leaders have recently refined approaches to how they manage behaviour to ensure that there is greater consistency within the school. Their approaches are having a positive effect.

Leaders have high expectations for what they want pupils to achieve. They have reviewed the curriculum and are ambitious for what they want pupils to know, do and understand. Leaders mostly understand the areas that need further development.

Pupils benefit from a broad curriculum and a wide choice of options. The careers programme raises pupils' aspirations and highlights the benefits of further and higher education.

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

Leaders have refined the curriculum significantly in response to their previous inspection. Most subjects have a clearly designed curriculum that identifies the key knowledge that pupils need to learn. The learning builds on what pupils have already studied. In some subjects, such as history and English, the curriculum skilfully incorporates higher level challenges and themes throughout. Leaders are ambitious that all the curriculum matches this level of cohesion. Leaders have plans to place the EBacc at the heart of the curriculum at key stage 4. They have undertaken effective work to develop reading across the school.

Leaders have worked with teachers to ensure that pupils' understanding is checked. Many teachers do this very effectively. However, in a few subjects this lacks precision, particularly when the key knowledge pupils need to know is less clearly identified. This means that some pupils' misconceptions are left unaddressed, and they are not ready to move on to more challenging work. Leaders have not yet ensured that pupils' misconceptions are consistently identified and addressed. In these circumstances, pupils find it hard to maintain their attention.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) follow the same curriculum as their peers. Leaders accurately identify the needs of pupils with SEND and engage effectively with parents. Plans that identify pupils' learning needs are shared with staff and are used effectively.

Leaders have introduced a more rigorous and analytical approach to the leadership of behaviour and attitudes. This is having a positive impact. For example, fewer pupils now experience suspensions. Leaders' systematic approach is improving attendance. Pupils are responding well to new initiatives introduced by leaders including a focus on punctuality and mobile phones. Leaders' intentions for how pupils behave are being met in the majority. However, there remain pockets of inconsistency as leaders have not yet ensured that a consistent approach for all staff. Leaders use alternative provision effectively and work to reintegrate the pupils who attend back into the school. Pupils say that bullying is rare, and they feel that staff resolve any issues well.

Leaders have ensured that plans for pupils' personal development are linked to all aspects of school life. For example, the curriculum offer broadens pupils' horizons and supports them to build meaningful relationships and tolerance for others. Leaders have developed a range of weekly extra-curricular activities linked to pupils' interests. These are considerable and benefit as wide a number of pupils as possible. Leaders track participation to ensure that all pupils can benefit. The careers programme is coherent with extensive links to local providers. Leaders work extensively with pupils to ensure that they secure a next step in education or training.

Those responsible for governance are committed to the school. They work regularly with leaders and provide effective support and challenge. Leaders and those responsible for governance are aware that they need to check more incisively that developments are being consistently applied as leaders intend. In this way, they can hold leaders to account more precisely. Staff reported they are proud of their school and are given opportunities to develop as professionals. They also report that leaders manage staff workload well.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders have created a strong culture of safeguarding in the school. Staff receive regular, timely training and safeguarding briefings. Staff know their responsibilities in being vigilant to any signs that pupils may be at risk. Concerns are handled appropriately and promptly. Leaders are well-informed about the safeguarding risks of the local area. They work tenaciously with local agencies to address these risks.

Pupils are taught how to keep themselves safe. They learn about important safeguarding topics, such as the risks of using social media and staying safe online.

## **What does the school need to do to improve?**

### **(Information for the school and appropriate authority)**

- Leaders have not clearly identified the knowledge that pupils will learn, and the order in which this will be taught, in some subjects. This prevents pupils from

building effectively on what they already know. Leaders should ensure that all subjects clearly identify the key knowledge that pupils should learn and how this will be sequenced.

- Sometimes teachers do not check precisely enough that pupils are secure in their knowledge of the most important curriculum content. This means that some pupils can find it difficult to learn new information in these subjects, because teachers have not checked they are secure with prior knowledge. Leaders should ensure that teachers use assessment consistently in all subjects, to pinpoint what pupils know and can do, then ensure that new learning builds securely on this.
- Leaders' checks on recent developments in the curriculum, and approaches to managing behaviour, are not sufficiently systematic to ensure that all provision matches the best. As a result, there are inconsistencies, and less effective practice persists. Leaders should ensure that assurance systems are in place to evaluate that these developments are being implemented as intended.

## 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 information from Ofsted Parent View 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.

## 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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	141712
<b>Local authority</b>	Dudley
<b>Inspection number</b>	10268384
<b>Type of school</b>	Secondary
<b>School category</b>	Academy converter
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11 to 16
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	600
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	Board of trustees
<b>Chair of trust</b>	Joanne Williams
<b>Headteacher</b>	Rae Cope
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.ridgewood.dudley.sch.uk/">http://www.ridgewood.dudley.sch.uk/</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	19 and 20 November 2019, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

## Information about this school

- The school is a smaller-than-average-size secondary school.
- The school is part of the Stour Vale Academy Trust.
- The school currently uses alternative provision for a small number of pupils at four providers.
- The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 7 to 13 with information and engagement about technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.

## Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.

- Inspectors met with the headteacher and other school leaders, including those responsible for safeguarding and for pupils with SEND.
- The lead inspector held a discussion with trustees, including the chair of trustees. He also held a discussion with governors, including the acting chair of governors.
- The lead inspector met with the trust's chief executive officer and interim secondary lead.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, science, history, modern foreign languages and mathematics. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors spoke to leaders about the curriculum in other subjects. They visited a number of lessons across a range of other subjects.
- Inspectors spoke with leaders, pupils and staff about the arrangements for safeguarding and reviewed safeguarding documentation, including pre-recruitment checks and safeguarding records.
- The lead inspector spoke to one provider of alternative provision.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and around the school.
- Inspectors held formal and informal discussions with groups of pupils from different year groups.
- Inspectors considered responses to Ofsted's online survey of parents' views, Parent View, and to the online staff and pupil surveys.

## Inspection team

Andrew Madden, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Richard Wakefield	His Majesty's Inspector
Clare Considine	Ofsted Inspector
Richard Sutton	Ofsted Inspector

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