

# Ridgewood High School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	103866
<b>Local Authority</b>	Dudley
<b>Inspection number</b>	286793
<b>Inspection dates</b>	27–28 March 2007
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Brian Cartwright HMI

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Comprehensive
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–16
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School	904
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	John Hodt
<b>Headteacher</b>	Clive Nutting
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	18 February 2002
<b>School address</b>	Park Road West Wollaston Stourbridge DY8 3NQ
<b>Telephone number</b>	01384 818445
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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two of Her Majesty's Inspectors and two Additional Inspectors.

## Description of the school

This average-sized school is pleasantly situated on the west edge of Stourbridge. The proportions of students with statements of special educational need (SEN) or who are on the SEN register are broadly average. There are slightly lower-than-average proportions of students eligible for free school meals. There are low proportions of students from minority ethnic heritage backgrounds, and low proportions for whom English is not their first language. Almost all students arrive at age 11, and stay through to 16. The current headteacher joined the school in the spring of 2006.

## Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 3

Ridgewood High School is providing a satisfactory quality of education. It is particularly effective at ensuring the good personal development and well-being of students. This is because of good care, guidance and support for all learners, coupled with an extensive range of additional activities enjoyed by most students.

The achievement and standards of students are satisfactory. Most students make the progress expected in examinations since the previous inspection in 2002. GCSE standards in 2006 were the school's best results, but they should have been better, given the students' starting points. Girls achieved as expected, but too many boys did not. The ineffectiveness of the school's self-evaluation meant this problem was not identified, despite early warnings apparent in 2004. The school has now carefully appraised the progress of the current Year 11, and has adequate support in place to ensure these students get their expected grades.

Teaching and learning are satisfactory and much is good. Lessons are characterised by good teacher-student relationships, and the good behaviour of students is evident both in class and in unsupervised gatherings. There are some excellent examples of marking and assessment, such as in design and technology and science that involves students. The marking sets clear targets and criteria in terms of grades and levels and gives students clear indication of the progress towards those targets. It ensures students have clear advice on how to reach those targets. But this good practice is not consistently applied in every subject. Day-to-day student diaries are not being used effectively to communicate progress to students, parents and tutors.

The academic curriculum is satisfactory, although it remains hampered by some poor accommodation, a lack of a library resource centre, and a relatively narrow range of vocational pathway options for most learners. Many of the issues identified at the previous inspection in 2002 have not been effectively resolved, for example, consistent delivery of the information and communication technology (ICT) entitlement for all learners at Key Stage 4. Middle-ability boys underachieved in 2006. These ongoing weaknesses contributed to the disappointing progress of some students in 2006. However, the swift response of the new leadership team to the underachievement of boys in 2006 gives more confidence in the school's current capacity to improve. New building should alleviate the problems with accommodation. A new Key Stage 4 curriculum is due to be launched in September 2007, following extensive review initiated by the new headteacher.

Because lesson planning is not always using school assessment information to ensure learning tasks are sufficiently challenging for every student, there remains some lack of challenge for the most able. Recent new faculty review practice has not yet fed key common priorities into the whole-school development plan. The school improvement plan is not closely enough linked to measurable performance outcomes.

Science specialist college status has improved outcomes for students in science. Despite the overall progress problems in 2006, students in science exceeded their expected targets and almost all were successfully entered for GCSE examinations. The partnership with local primary schools is of good quality. The leadership of this strand has a clear purpose, centred upon student enjoyment and achievement in science. The faculty seeks to access the latest education methodologies in science, and coordinates professional development locally for science teachers. The school has met its performance targets in science.

## What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure monitoring identifies a few clear priorities directly related to teaching and learning performance and sets measurable achievement targets so that actions can be evaluated.
- Resolve the shortfalls in curriculum provision and challenge for able students identified in the previous inspection.
- Use assessment information to ensure lesson planning challenges all abilities and gives students clear, regular advice on how to improve their progress towards challenging targets in all subjects.

## Achievement and standards

### Grade: 3

Achievement and standards are satisfactory. Students have slightly above-average standards on entry in most years, although in 2001 they were substantially higher. Standards at Key Stage 3 have been broadly in line with average since 2003, and represent satisfactory achievement overall. However, this hides a picture of quite wide variation year on year. In English in 2006 fewer students gained the highest levels than was expected, indicating continuing questions over the achievement of higher-ability students. Science Key Stage 3 standards have been consistently above average.

Key Stage 4 GCSE standards in 2006 were the highest in the school's history. Although the overall threshold measure of five higher-grade GCSEs was above average, the measure that includes English and mathematics was the same as the national average. Girls achieved as well as expected, based on their standards on entry to the school, but many boys underachieved. Some of this shortfall was evident in 2004, when Key Stage 3 tests indicated lower-than-expected standards for some groups of learners. The current performance of this year's Year 11 students shows no major discrepancy from their predicted targets based on Key Stage 2, and no significant underperformance amongst boys. New intervention strategies are operating to ensure more students complete courses, and the exam entry rate is higher than in 2006. Achievement is satisfactory overall.

Students with learning difficulties or disabilities (LDD) and others on the SEN register achieve at least as well as their colleagues, making satisfactory progress overall.

## Personal development and well-being

### Grade: 2

The personal development and well-being of the students is good. Students enjoy school. Attendance has recently improved and is satisfactory. A few students do not recognise the value of their schooling but most work hard in class and engage fully in the learning activities they are offered. A new policy has led to improved behaviour and there is very little disruption to learning. Behaviour around the school is good, for example students behaved very responsibly whilst waiting for classroom access. A new policy on behaviour has been generally welcomed by students and parents. Serious disciplinary incidents occur no more often than in other schools, although permanent exclusions were slightly higher last year. Students are often challenged to consider the real purpose for their studies. They are helped to think about the important decisions for their future lives. Students learn about right and wrong in the context of learning together and are keenly aware of the many cultural differences contributing to the community.

Students respond well to the expectation that they have a healthy lifestyle. There is an increasing take-up of healthy-eating options. Most students take part in extra-curricular activities involving exercise. A high proportion of students participate in school teams and bands. There are many opportunities for students to contribute to their own community through positions of responsibility at senior level and in volunteering to get involved – particularly in music, theatre and the many charity initiatives in which the school excels. Their contribution is outstanding. The work of the school council is well developed. The confident, articulate and responsible members work creatively together to improve school life and learning.

Students' preparation for their future economic well-being is satisfactory. They enjoy opportunities for work experience but insufficient provision of ICT in Years 10 and 11 restricts the systematic teaching of the national curriculum in ICT to all students.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 3**

Teaching and learning are satisfactory, with many good features. Students enjoy their learning and this is helped by good relationships between students and teachers and good behaviour in class. Lessons begin well and clear objectives are set. There is usually an evaluation of how effectively objectives have been achieved, but this is sometimes too rushed for real reflection. The best lessons challenge all the students of all abilities, with varied activities that engage their interest and match different learning styles. A few lessons do not sufficiently capture students' imagination because teachers do not encourage them to think and work independently. Students with learning difficulties and disabilities are very effectively supported by teaching assistants. Some teachers set students different tasks matched to individual abilities, but this is not widespread enough to meet the needs of gifted and talented students. Teachers give students realistic target grades but do not always show them clearly how to improve their work. Not all staff use assessment data to inform lesson planning. Students learn well when they assess their own or each other's work and explain things to each other. The school's science specialism has had a positive impact on the quality of self-assessment by involving students at the start of topics in order to confirm their prior knowledge, and at the end to help guide revision and review.

Staff peer observation of lessons and a system of Faculty Improvement Partners have both been introduced as a way of sharing good practice. The impact of these initiatives on improving teaching and learning has not yet been rigorously evaluated. They are not used to set clear strategies for improvement.

### **Curriculum and other activities**

#### **Grade: 3**

The curriculum is satisfactory. The statutory requirements are fully in place in Key Stage 3. At Key Stage 4, ICT is expected to be taught through other subjects, but the ICT outcomes are not monitored. There are insufficient school ICT facilities to meet the demands of all subjects. The lack of a library or learning resource centre further limits the opportunities for students to develop independent learning skills.

Flexible arrangements for some students help them gain workplace skills in employment settings. There are some vocational options and plans to increase their range. Work experience gives

students a valuable insight into the world of work. The science curriculum is expanding thanks to specialist status and now provides early certification (in Year 10), separate science options, environmental science and applied science alongside a double award for all.

The outstanding commitment of staff creates extensive extra-curricular opportunities enjoyed by all students. They play a big part in their good personal development and well-being. Opportunities range from subject-specific clubs (like science), performing arts, many sports, the Duke of Edinburgh award, residential experiences for all students, and many trips and visits.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 2**

The quality of care provided is good and is well managed. There is a high level of commitment by staff and students have ready access to help and advice from a range of appropriately qualified adults. Good links with primary schools identify the strengths and needs of all students and ensure a happy transfer.

LDD students make satisfactory progress and are well supported. Safeguarding and health and safety procedures are secure. Key staff know vulnerable students' needs. Students feel safe at school and confident in talking to staff if they have personal difficulties. Incidents of bullying are dealt with effectively. The vertical tutor system creates a team ethos and older students guide and support younger ones.

There are well-established links with parents and outside agencies. Parents receive regular reports and are involved when there is any concern about lack of progress. Careers advice is of good quality and students receive a high level of individual support, particularly during Years 9 and 11.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 3**

Leadership and management are satisfactory. Day-to-day routines are well managed, creating a good working ethos amongst staff and students. The views of staff, students and parents are carefully considered. Effective action to improve student behaviour has been appreciated by students, parents and governors. The school benefits from a steady supply of new staff because of the effort it puts into nurturing new teachers as they begin their careers. Good partnership exists to support this work.

The school's approach to monitoring and evaluation is satisfactory. The school has retrospectively identified why some Year 11 boys underachieved in 2006, and has taken steps to ensure this is not repeated. There has been some effective sharing of good practice to promote literacy. The school's new approach to monitoring has identified some shortfalls related to consistency of assessment in teaching and learning but has not yet effectively dealt with them. For example, no effective action was taken to ensure consistency in the use of student diaries to record targets and points for improvement.

The current strategic plan has too many priorities and these are not sufficiently focused on student achievement. This limits the extent to which staff can participate in a clear, shared school improvement vision. Lack of measurable student performance success criteria in the plans make it difficult for governors to hold the school to account. Governance is satisfactory

overall. Governors are aware of the shortfalls in the information they have received in the past and are actively involved in changes to improve this situation.

Finance is well managed to ensure the school makes best use of its resources. As a result the school has improved some of its old accommodation and is adding some new buildings. Longer term financial planning is informed by the school improvement plan, but this lacks accurate costings which makes it difficult to evaluate the impact and value for money of the plan.

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## Annex A

## Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	<b>School Overall</b>
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### Overall effectiveness

<b>How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?</b>	3
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	4
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	No

### Achievement and standards

<b>How well do learners achieve?</b>	3
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	3

### Personal development and well-being

<b>How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The behaviour of learners	2
The attendance of learners	3
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3

### The quality of provision

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?</b>	3
<b>How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?</b>	3
<b>How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?</b>	2

<sup>1</sup> Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average to below average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

## Annex A

**Leadership and management**

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	3
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

### **Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

Thank you for your time and enthusiastic contribution to discussions with inspectors. You all did the school proud, and helped us confirm the strength of the personal development you enjoy at Ridgewood. The school is providing you with a sound education that means you should gain the qualifications you expect. A major strength of the school is the huge range of opportunities for sport, music, drama, outdoor adventure, specialist clubs and work experiences. These make a big contribution to your development as young men and women, and are made possible because of the outstanding commitment of your teachers and support staff to your future well-being. We were very impressed by the work of the school council, in all its committees.

There are things that the school could do to make it better meet your learning needs. First of all, the school's improvement plans need to be more closely linked to your academic achievement, as does its monitoring of your performance. Some issues that were of concern in 2002 have yet to be fully sorted out, and include limitations for ICT at Key Stage 4, some underperformance amongst boys, and a need for more vocationally related options at Key Stage 4. Although most of you know your expected grades in many subjects, most of you don't know how well you are progressing towards them, or have a clear view of how to get there. The planners do have spaces to record this information, but they are not being consistently used by all subjects yet. We think some lessons could be better planned to set you tasks that challenge you according to your abilities.

Best wishes for your future success.