

# Ridgeway High School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	105097
<b>Local Authority</b>	Wirral
<b>Inspection number</b>	287124
<b>Inspection dates</b>	2–3 May 2007
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Judith Tolley

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>	Secondary
<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	794
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mr L Stewart
<b>Headteacher</b>	Ms A Walsh
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	19 March 2001
<b>School address</b>	Noctorum Avenue Noctorum Prenton Merseyside CH43 9EB
<b>Telephone number</b>	0151 6783322
<b>Fax number</b>	0151 6786571

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by four Additional Inspectors.

## Description of the school

Ridgeway High School is smaller than average. It is a Business and Enterprise College. The majority of students are of White British heritage. The proportion of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is much higher than average as is the proportion of students eligible for free school meals. The proportion of students for whom English is an additional language is very low. The school has the Artsmark Silver Award, Investors in People and the International School Award.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 1

This is an outstanding school. 'Every child achieves' is the school's motto. Inspection evidence indicates that this is indeed the case at Ridgeway. Standards are broadly average. Achievement is outstanding. The school's own evaluation of its effectiveness is both rigorous and accurate and not only involves all staff but students as well.

Students' personal development is outstanding, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. It is particularly striking in the way that students' social skills and their love of learning develop during their time at the school. Students take pride in their work and are eager to do well. They have excellent relationships with each other and their teachers. Behaviour is exemplary. Students play an important role in shaping their school and take responsibility for their own learning. They treat this very seriously. This is a major factor in enabling them to achieve as they do and is at the heart of the school's work. Students are given very high standards of care, guidance and support and, as a result, become confident and articulate young people, capable of making the right choices. The school equips them very well for the next stage in education and the wider world. They enjoy the opportunities they are given to pursue their interests both in lessons and in out of school activities. They greatly appreciate the support they are given to enable them to achieve their best.

Outstanding teaching, coupled with extremely positive attitudes towards learning, ensure all students make excellent progress from their starting points. The curriculum is highly innovative and imaginative, but retains at its heart the purpose of meeting the needs and potential of each individual student. A stress on literacy skills and their use in Key Stage 3 helps counter students' relative weakness in this area when they come to the school.

The school's specialist status has had a significant impact on raising students' achievement, skill levels and awareness of the world of work. Targets in business and enterprise have been met; those in information and communication technology (ICT) have been exceeded. In 2006, targets in mathematics were missed, but the school has taken the necessary steps to remedy this. Good use has been made both of widening curriculum opportunities and also increased resources to stimulate all departments to include aspects of business and enterprise in their work when appropriate. Most do this with genuine enthusiasm, thus contributing to, as well as drawing on, the impact of the specialism.

Leadership and management are outstanding. Very effective planning for improvement, based on rigorous analysis of assessment information, lead to the school having a very clear understanding of its effectiveness. Issues raised in the last inspection have been tackled very successfully. Standards have improved significantly year on year and continue to rise. The very clear direction and outstanding leadership of the headteacher, very strongly supported by all staff, students and governors, ensure that the capacity to improve further is excellent. Governors provide very strong support and are actively involved in the life of the school. They have an excellent understanding of its strengths and areas for improvement and act extremely effectively as critical friends. The school provides excellent value for money.

### What the school should do to improve further

- The school has identified the aspects of its work that need improvement and has plans to tackle them.

## Achievement and standards

### Grade: 1

Students enter the school in Year 7 with standards that are well below the national average. The majority have weak literacy skills and this has a negative impact on their work across the curriculum. The school immediately and effectively addresses the problem as well as very successfully raising the esteem and confidence of students from the outset. Consequently, they develop increasingly positive attitudes to learning and they achieve very well. In 2006, results in the end of Key Stage 3 tests in English, mathematics and science were below national averages. Even though this group of students had particularly weak literacy skills, their achievement was good. Inspection evidence indicates that this group has established a secure basis for making even greater progress during Key Stage 4.

By the end of Key Stage 4, all students make outstanding progress in relation to their starting points. In 2006, the proportion of students achieving five or more GCSE passes at grade C or above was in line with national averages. This represents outstanding achievement during their time at Ridgeway. The number of students gaining the higher grades in English and mathematics, though improving, is significantly below the national average. The school has taken decisive action to bring about further improvements in standards in mathematics and literacy and this is having a positive impact. There is a significant and sustained trend of improvement.

There are no significant differences between the achievements of different groups of students. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make the same exceptional progress as their peers.

## Personal development and well-being

### Grade: 1

Students say they feel safe and secure and enjoy school. There are very few incidents of bullying and these are dealt with quickly and appropriately. Attendance is good. The involvement of parents in driving up the level of attendance has been particularly effective and expertise in this field is now being shared with other schools. Students display a mature and considerate attitude to others. They are aware of the benefit of healthy lifestyles and participation in physical exercise, including a broad range of sports and games, is very high. The school council has secured a greater variety of healthy options in the school canteen and many students are now making healthy choices. Students regularly share their views on all aspects of the school's work. They play a full part in tracking and planning their own progress. As a consequence, their capacity as independent learners is fully developed. Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent because of the frequent opportunities they are given for reflection and expression.

## Quality of provision

### Teaching and learning

#### Grade: 1

Consistently good, and frequently outstanding, teaching and learning enable all students to achieve their best. Lessons take place in a purposeful and harmonious atmosphere of mutual respect. Students work together in a collaborative and cooperative manner. Teachers have very good subject knowledge. Consequently, lessons are thoroughly prepared and activities are well sequenced so that students build very effectively on previous learning. Very effective questioning

challenges students effectively and enables them to understand new ideas rapidly. A very good range of activities allow students to explore ideas for themselves. Students sustain very high levels of concentration because lessons are interesting. Almost all lessons are brisk and challenging and in many lessons, teachers' enthusiasm for their subject is contagious. In a small number of less effective lessons, there is limited engagement of students in the development of ideas and a lack of match between the work and students' ability.

Students know their targets, how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve. Many are actively involved in assessing their own and their peers' work. The regular tracking and assessing of students' progress is a key feature in raising standards. Students appreciate the extra support teachers provide in helping them with their work.

## **Curriculum and other activities**

### **Grade: 1**

The curriculum is excellent. The three routes towards GCSE accreditation offer a wide range and combination of courses. These have been planned with careful thought as to how they link in with post-16 education and employment. Vocational courses are offered but the school has resisted the temptation to over-simplify pathways into 'academic' or 'vocational' approaches. Making ICT and a modern foreign language compulsory has strengthened the business and enterprise dimension crucial to the school's work. This is further strengthened by the business partner links within each year group and the expanding range of entrepreneurial activities pupils are encouraged to consider. Early GCSE entry is possible in several subjects and this is used to motivate pupils and give them confidence. It also enables additional courses to be taken at Key Stage 4. This is an excellent principle, but the school has not checked how this can impact on the demands made on some of the most committed pupils. The provision for out of school activities is outstanding. There are many opportunities for involvement in sport, music and drama that contribute much to students' personal development. Pupils also enthuse about study clubs and the six intensive study days, which allow them to really focus on an aspect of their studies.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 1**

The excellent care provided for students enables them to make exemplary progress during their five years at the school. Transition from primary school is managed very effectively. Support is focused on those students who need to improve their literacy skills and to develop greater self-esteem. This allows them to learn effectively in mainstream classes. Guidance for Year 9 students making option choices and for those moving into Post 16 education is very strong and students say they greatly value this as it allows them to make well informed decisions. Child protection and risk assessment procedures are in place, including checks on the suitability of all adults who work in the school. A typical comment from students is that the school is 'like a family' where everyone is respected and fully included. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are fully integrated into the life of the school. The tracking of academic progress is thorough and effective, allowing teachers to take informed action to secure improvement and students to understand what they need to do to make further progress.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 1**

The headteacher has created a common sense of purpose throughout the school and a determination to achieve excellence. Leaders and managers at all levels monitor progress throughout the school on a regular basis and continually strive for improvement. The system of tracking students' progress, setting targets and involving both students and their parents is very effective in raising standards and ensuring students achieve their best. The school sets itself challenging targets, based on searching analysis of assessment data and rigorous monitoring of all aspects of the school's work. The monitoring of lessons provides an accurate view of the quality of teaching and learning and informs both the professional development of staff and the ways in which they might engage and challenge students even more effectively. The result is continued and sustained improvement.

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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>	1
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

### Achievement and standards

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

### Personal development and well-being

<b>How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The behaviour of learners	1
The attendance of learners	2
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
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	1

### The quality of provision

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?</b>	1
<b>How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?</b>	1
<b>How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?</b>	1

<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>	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1
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**

Inspection of Ridgeway High School, Prenton, Merseyside, CH43 9EB

On behalf of all the inspectors, I would like to thank you for making us feel so welcome when we visited your school recently. We thoroughly enjoyed talking to you and hearing your views. We were particularly impressed by the way you work together with each other and with your teachers to make the school as good as it is.

I'm sure you will be delighted to hear that we think your school is an outstanding one. You all work very hard indeed and make excellent progress. This is because the adults are good at helping you to learn and because you take your work very seriously. You know how well you are doing and how to improve.

You are looked after very well and your behaviour is excellent. You all get on very well with each other and with your teachers. The adults at the school work very hard to ensure you can achieve your best and to ensure you have every opportunity to pursue your interests. The school makes the most of its specialist status as a Business and Enterprise College to give you experience of developing your expertise through enterprise activities and to enable you to make the right choices. You told us how much you appreciate the way the teachers listen to your views and help you with your learning. You play an important role in helping the school to make decisions. You are right to be proud of your school and of your achievements.

Your lessons are interesting and we noticed how much you enjoyed working together to solve problems and how good you were at doing this. The school has already identified what it needs to improve further and has plans in place to achieve this. You can help by continuing to work hard.

We hope you continue to enjoy your learning. We wish you every success in the future.