



# Ridgeway School

## Inspection Report

**Unique Reference Number** 109742  
**Local Authority** BEDFORDSHIRE  
**Inspection number** 288482  
**Inspection dates** 1–2 November 2006  
**Reporting inspector** Margaret Goodchild

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Special	<b>School address</b>	Hill Rise
<b>School category</b>	Community		Kempston, Bedford
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–19		Bedfordshire MK42 7EB
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed	<b>Telephone number</b>	01234402402
<b>Number on roll (school)</b>	67	<b>Fax number</b>	01234402410
<b>Number on roll (6th form)</b>	0		
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body	<b>Chair</b>	Mrs Eileen Swaisland
		<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr Graham Allard
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	10 March 2003		

<b>Age group</b> 4–19	<b>Inspection dates</b> 1–2 November 2006	<b>Inspection number</b> 288482
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## **Introduction**

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

## **Description of the school**

This is a special school for pupils with physical disabilities, medical conditions and associated learning difficulties. A high proportion of pupils are not able to communicate verbally. Pupils' difficulties mean that attainment on entry to the school is well below average, though it ranges from very low to broadly average. The school gained Investor in People status in 2003.

## **Key for inspection grades**

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

## **Overall effectiveness of the school**

### **Grade: 2**

This is a good school that is deservedly popular with pupils and parents. The school has made good overall improvement since the last inspection, sustaining and building on its strengths. It has a stable and committed staff and is well placed to improve further.

Teamwork between the staff is very strong. The work of teachers and teaching assistants is backed up by outstanding therapeutic and specialist support for those who need it in their physical development and communication. The school is exceptionally well resourced and pupils learn in attractive and high quality, purpose-built accommodation. As a result, they make outstanding progress in their personal development and are supported and cared for exceptionally well.

Standards are below average because of pupils' learning difficulties and disabilities, but pupils achieve well as a result of good teaching and a curriculum that effectively meets their needs. Children in the Foundation Stage achieve exceptionally well. Where lessons are outstanding, teachers make exceptionally good use of assessment information to plan work that is matched precisely to the next steps in each pupil's learning. However, this is not always the case as some teachers do not plan carefully enough to ensure that all pupils build on what they can already do. When teachers mark pupils' work, they provide comments to encourage pupils but do not always offer guidance about how they could improve.

The school is led and managed well. The headteacher and senior managers promote a very positive atmosphere which gives rise to high morale amongst the staff, makes pupils feel that they really matter and brings about exceptionally good personal development, support and care. The school is accurate in its overall evaluation of its strengths and weaknesses and has satisfactory systems in place for monitoring the quality of education. These are not as rigorous or focused as they should be, however, in order to improve teaching and, thus, raise achievement. Governors are supportive of the school and the governing body is led well. Governance is satisfactory overall because governors are not sufficiently focused, or strategic, in the way they collect information about the school's work and contribute to school development.

## **Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form**

### **Grade: 2**

The school makes good provision for students at Post-16. They achieve well and gain a good range of qualifications, appropriate to their needs and abilities, by the time they leave. They benefit academically and socially from the time they spend at college, and make good progress in acquiring basic skills. Students' personal development is outstanding and they are cared for exceptionally well. They relate confidently with others, readily expressing their ideas, and show an impressive understanding and concern for other people's difficulties. They are proactive in running clubs and helping out in classes, and leave school as mature and very responsible young people.

## What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that teachers consistently use information about the next steps in individual pupils' learning when they plan their lessons and that they communicate, especially to more able pupils, what they need to do to improve.
- Strengthen the way the school's effectiveness is evaluated by managers and governors ensuring that information gathered both formally and informally is recorded, analysed and used in ongoing school improvement.

## Achievement and standards

### Grade: 2

#### Grade for sixth form: 2

Pupils achieve well overall and make exceptionally good progress in working towards the communication, physical and personal development targets in their individual education plans. Where teaching is outstanding, all pupils make clear gains in their skills, knowledge and understanding. However, where teaching is otherwise good and has many strengths, higher attaining pupils in particular are not always given work that is matched closely enough to the next steps in their learning.

In Years 10 and 11, pupils begin to gain qualifications through taking Entry Level awards in a small number of subjects, with the most able pupils gaining one or two GCSE passes. At Post-16, they achieve well and make good progress in adding further qualifications, especially through attending local colleges. By the time they leave, students gain accreditation in a range of basic skills; more able students add to their GCSEs and have good opportunities to take vocational courses.

## Personal development and well-being

### Grade: 1

#### Grade for sixth form: 1

Pupils make outstanding progress in their personal development and they love coming to school. Attendance is good and pupils only stay away if they are ill or need medical treatment. All pupils behave extremely well and they enjoy exceptionally good relationships with one another. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. Pupils are responsive and reflective during assemblies and many have a good understanding of different faiths and cultures. During the inspection, younger pupils particularly enjoyed joining a local lower school for their Eid celebrations. Pupils' social awareness is outstanding. They have an astounding empathy for the problems of others and have raised significant amounts for charity. As a member of the school council said, 'We are not here just to help ourselves, but also other people'.

Pupils move around the school safely and feel secure. They take good amounts of exercise and are learning about the importance of making healthy choices. The development of pupils' independence is particularly good and they make good progress

in gaining basic skills. They develop outstanding personal qualities that stand them in good stead for the future.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

**Grade: 2**

**Grade for sixth form: 2**

The quality of teaching and learning is good, with some examples of outstanding teaching. This was evident, for instance, in mathematics and drama lessons in Years 10 and 11 and in a lesson for children in Reception to Year 2. In these lessons - which serve as exemplars for the school as a whole - work was matched very closely to the needs of each pupil and all the staff displayed very high expectations. Throughout the school, teachers have very positive relationships with their pupils and make exceptionally good use of their teaching assistants, who contribute significantly to pupils' learning. For instance, teaching assistants ensure that pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties are involved and engaged with the work that is set for them. Teachers use resources imaginatively and effectively to make learning interesting for the pupils and to support them in grasping new concepts. All staff work together as a seamless team in meeting the physical and communication needs of the pupils.

Improvement in assessment since the last inspection means that the school now has sufficient information to track pupils' progress. It uses this effectively in the way it plans the curriculum but its use in planning lessons is inconsistent.

### **Curriculum and other activities**

**Grade: 2**

**Grade for sixth form: 2**

The school provides pupils with a good range of learning opportunities. The curriculum is planned particularly well to promote social and physical development, and the school is justifiably proud of the way it enables pupils to experience a wide range of activities whatever their physical disability. There is a good range of trips out of school: pupils particularly benefit from the physical challenges of their residential week. The impact of college links for students at post-16 is very positive. They grow in independence and pick up a good raft of qualifications to prepare them for life after school. There are limited opportunities for pupils in Years 10 and 11 to experience work and take vocational courses. The school has rightly identified this as a development priority.

## Care, guidance and support

### Grade: 1

#### Grade for sixth form: 1

Care, guidance and support are outstanding. The school works very closely and effectively with parents, who express a high level of satisfaction. Attention to physical and medical needs is excellent. The school works particularly well with the adjacent Child Development Centre to access high quality therapeutic and medical care. Pupils' personal care is dealt with unobtrusively and sensitively so that dignity is retained and as little education as possible is missed. The school meets all child protection and health and safety requirements. Excellent relationships mean that pupils feel happy at school. They know their ideas are listened to and all have an adult to turn to should they be worried or upset.

Pupils receive outstanding personal guidance and satisfactory academic guidance, but more able pupils in particular do not always receive sufficient advice about how to improve their work. The very good number of support staff adds to the high quality of support in lessons. Teaching assistants are very adept at knowing when to step back and let pupils use their independence and tackle a difficult task.

## Leadership and management

### Grade: 2

#### Grade for sixth form: 2

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher and senior managers know all the pupils very well as individuals and are actively involved in supporting the staff to ensure that pupils' personal, physical and communication needs are fully met.

Senior managers are accurate in their overall judgements about the school's effectiveness and set clear educational direction for improvement. Monitoring of teaching and learning at all levels is not as rigorous as it should be, however, in continuously identifying where provision could be refined. The school meets statutory requirements for checking the overall performance of its teachers; it supports new staff very well. Effective systems are in place for monitoring work within individual subjects, and regular informal visits to classrooms provide managers with valuable additional information. This is not systematically recorded, however, nor are the findings consistently used to bring about whole-school improvement. Although, there are some outstanding teachers within the senior team, their skills are not shared as well as they could be to bring about consistency of teaching in the school as a whole. Staff are given good opportunities to undertake training and they all benefit enormously from the expertise provided by a strong team of therapists.

The governing body makes a satisfactory contribution to the school's work. Governors support the school well and are led by a well-informed chair. Governors make visits to collect information about the school's work but this activity is not as focused as it

should be. Resources are used to good effect and the school gives good value for money.



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## 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>	<b>16-19</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>	2	2
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1	1
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	1	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	Yes

### Achievement and standards

<b>How well do learners achieve?</b>	2	2
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	3	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2	2

### Personal development and well-being

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

### The quality of provision

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?</b>	2	2
<b>How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?</b>	2	2
<b>How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?</b>	1	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.

## Leadership and management

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	2	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2	2
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	3	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2	2
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3	3
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes	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

3 November 2006

Dear Pupils

Ridgeway School, Hill Rise, Kempston, Bedford, MK42 7EB

Thank you for making us so welcome when we visited your school. We really enjoyed visiting your classes and seeing all the things you do. The best part of all was the time we spent talking to you and hearing your views. You are a real credit to the school. I am writing now to tell you what we found out about Ridgeway School.

This is a good school that is helping you to make good progress with your work. This is because teaching is good and you get a lot of support from the teaching assistants. As you get older, there are good opportunities for you to gain qualifications, especially at post-16. You said how much you enjoy school and how you find it a lovely place to be. We could see exactly why you feel that. It is a happy place where people really care about one another. As a result, you are all making outstanding progress in your personal development and growing into confident, sociable young people.

The headteacher, staff and governors are keen to make the school even better. I have asked them to do this by making sure that:

- teachers think about what each of you need to learn next when they plan their lessons and that when they mark your work, they explain how you could improve it;
- managers improve some of the ways in which they check how well the school is doing.

You can help the headteacher and staff by continuing to be a joy to teach and by trying as hard as you can.

Yours sincerely

Margaret Goodchild

Lead Inspector