



# Ridgeway School

## Inspection Report

**Unique Reference Number** 113535  
**Local Authority** Plymouth  
**Inspection number** 289667  
**Inspection dates** 9–10 October 2006  
**Reporting inspector** Peter Griffiths HMI

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Comprehensive	<b>School address</b>	Moorland Road
<b>School category</b>	Community		Plympton
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–18		Plymouth PL7 2RS
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed	<b>Telephone number</b>	01752 338373
<b>Number on roll (school)</b>	1251	<b>Fax number</b>	01752 331559
<b>Number on roll (6th form)</b>	272		
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body	<b>Chair</b>	Kevin Willis
		<b>Headteacher</b>	John Didymus
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	26 February 2001		

<b>Age group</b>	<b>Inspection dates</b>	<b>Inspection number</b>
11–18	9–10 October 2006	289667

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## Introduction

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

## Description of the school

Ridgeway is a very popular school with a growing sixth form. The school has specialist science college status. The school has relatively few students from minority ethnic backgrounds. Whilst the proportion of students with learning difficulties is below the national average, the percentage with a statement of special educational needs is above average. The school serves a socio-economically diverse community.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## **Overall effectiveness of the school**

### **Grade: 2**

Ridgeway is a good school, with some outstanding features. The staff, students and parents think so and the inspection team agrees. The leadership and management of the school are good. The senior leaders and governors have an accurate view of the school's strengths and weaknesses, although the impact on achievement of the provision for students' personal development should be more fully determined. The school has implemented a range of strategies that ensure that students of all abilities make good progress and attain good standards.

The good teaching ensures that students show positive attitudes to their work and make good progress. Teachers' good subject knowledge and detailed planning lends confidence to their teaching styles, which engage students. The focus on improving teaching and learning has yielded benefits for the students but in the development plan, forming part of a broader issue, it would benefit from additional emphasis. The outstanding curriculum is well matched to the students' needs so all can succeed. The school's specialist science college status has had a positive influence on the work in many other subjects. Students' behaviour is well managed and relationships are good.

This is a school where every child matters. The students are extremely well cared for and feel safe and this is contributing to their desire to do well. Many students take part in the wide range of extra activities. The vast majority of parents are very happy with the school and all it offers.

The school has clearly demonstrated that it has a strong capacity to improve. It has successfully addressed all the weaknesses identified at the time of the last inspection, made determined strides towards improving learning and achievement and successfully established itself as a specialist science college. The school has formed good working partnerships that have contributed to the achievement and well-being of the students. The school uses its resources very effectively and provides good value for money.

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

### **Grade: 2**

The sixth form, as the school knows, is good. The number of students entering the sixth form continues to increase and a good proportion stay on into Year 13. Students are encouraged to have high expectations and are supported by effective monitoring of their academic progress. Overall standards in the General Certificate of Education (GCE) are satisfactory and those in Advanced Vocational subjects are high. Examination results are thoroughly analysed and weaknesses addressed. Students benefit from an outstanding broad curriculum that includes a focus on adopting healthy lifestyles and developing key skills. Resources are managed well and the leadership of the sixth form is good.

## **What the school should do to improve further**

- determine more accurately the effects on achievement of the school's programme for personal development
- give teaching and learning greater prominence in the school's development plan.

## **Achievement and standards**

**Grade: 2**

**Grade for sixth form: 2**

Students' attainment on entry to the school varies from year to year but is broadly average. Students make good progress throughout the school. In 2005, standards at the end of Year 9 were broadly average whilst those attained by both Year 11 and Year 13 students were above average. Students with learning difficulties and those who speak English as an additional language receive very effective support to help meet their particular needs. In consequence, their achievement is as good as that of all other students.

The school has focused resources on particular groups of students who would benefit from extra support. A mentoring programme for students in Year 11 led to this particular group achieving better than expected results in the GCSE examinations in 2005 and 2006. Groups of Year 9 students have benefited from after-school booster classes in English, mathematics and science. As a result, they did better than expected in the 2006 national tests and achieved above average standards, particularly in mathematics, science and information and communication technology (ICT). The school sets realistic targets for test results, firmly based on its knowledge of students' aptitudes and potential. The 2006 data indicates that the targets for Year 9 and for Year 11 students were either met or exceeded.

## **Personal development and well-being**

**Grade: 2**

**Grade for sixth form: 2**

The overall quality of students' personal development and well-being is good with some outstanding features. Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. A key strength is the excellent work undertaken by students in the local and wider community. Students' awareness of social issues is excellent. They can empathise with disadvantaged people, for example rough sleepers or those addicted to drugs or alcohol. Many students give generously of their time to raise funds for charities working with disadvantaged communities in Africa. Lessons in religious education contribute much to students' growing spiritual awareness, and in art and English lessons, students show an excellent understanding of different cultures.

Students enjoy school. Each year, a group train to become 'buddies' and advocates for students struggling to make friends or who may experience bullying. This, along with the school's student support programme, ensures that students feel safe and well

cared for. Attendance across the school is average, with few incidents of exclusions in recent years. Students' attitudes and behaviour are very good. Students are aware of the need to eat healthily and many choose to do so. They have made a major contribution to the development of healthier meals. Students participate in sport and there are good levels of participation in extra-curricular sports activities.

Students are extremely well prepared for their future economic well-being. In particular, the provision for work-related learning is excellent.

A significant number of students choose to contribute to whole-school developments and serve on the school councils. Students are effective participants in decision-making. They show a growing maturity that prepares them well for adult responsibilities.

The outcomes of some aspects of the school's personal development programme have been determined. However, if the overall impact of the programme on students' achievement is to be evaluated, the outcomes of all elements will have to be assessed.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 2**

#### **Grade for sixth form: 2**

In the main school and post 16, the quality of teaching and learning is good, with some that is outstanding and none that is unsatisfactory. Lessons often proceed at a cracking pace and the teachers employ a variety of approaches, such as group work, changes of pace and peer assessment, to support students' learning. Here, students are fully involved in all aspects of the lesson. The team of teaching assistants are well trained and suitably briefed to support students. They make a significant contribution to students' learning.

All teachers are provided with data on students' prior attainment to inform the way they plan lessons, place students in groups and set targets for students' achievement.

The adoption of Assessment for Learning as a core improvement strategy is having a positive impact on teaching and learning. The school's 'Teaching, Learning and Assessment Group' has developed and implemented an effective whole-school approach to monitoring students and setting targets that are linked to levels in the National Curriculum or GCSE. The school is aware of the need to further develop its assessment strategy for citizenship.

Continuing to improve teaching and learning is at the heart of the school's approach to continuing to raise standards. Currently, teaching and learning forms part of a broader issue in the school's development plan rather than an issue in its own right.

## **Curriculum and other activities**

### **Grade: 1**

#### **Grade for sixth form: 1**

The curriculum is outstanding. Consistent with the school's strong commitment to care for the individual, the flexible curriculum, including vocational courses in Key Stage 4 and post 16, provides outstanding opportunities for all students to make progress and achieve well. Post 16 provision continues to grow, with a wide range of GCE and Advanced Vocational courses available to students. Continuity in vocational provision from Key Stage 4 to post 16 is excellent.

Good quality schemes of work linked to national frameworks or examination course requirements are in place. The regular evaluation of test and examination results is ensuring that appropriate courses are put in place that continue to meet the needs of the students.

The school's specialist science college status has had an outstanding impact on the whole curriculum with, for example, excellent collaborative ventures being undertaken between science and the creative arts. The school ensures that all students, including those studying post 16, have every opportunity to develop their key skills. The school makes particularly good provision for the development of students' literacy, numeracy and ICT skills.

Citizenship, enterprise, health and careers education programmes have been combined into a single comprehensive programme which is supplemented by special events days. The programme benefits considerably from the involvement of health and counselling services. The school is aware of the need to fully evaluate its provision so that it can be sure it fully meets the needs of the students.

The school has outstanding local and international links. It has made excellent use, throughout the curriculum, of the knowledge and understanding gained by students and by staff who have been involved in the links.

The school provides outstanding extra-curricular opportunities for its students. They have excellent opportunities to contribute to, and take on responsibilities in, the community. Opportunities for enrichment are extensive and varied. The programmes have exceptionally high levels of take-up and are very much enjoyed by the students.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 2**

#### **Grade for sixth form: 2**

The quality of the care, guidance and support of the students is good, with some outstanding features. All staff are committed to the well-being of the students, making sure that the school environment is safe. Thorough procedures are in place to safeguard students. The school has a nominated child protection officer; staff are adequately trained and child protection arrangements are sound and kept under review.

The school has a wide range of excellent strategies and safety nets in place to provide guidance and support for students. Students feel safe and secure and are confident to approach members of staff for help if any difficulties arise. They are aware that staff respect them and do their best for them. The counselling service is very successful in meeting a wide range of need and helps many students feel more positive about themselves and therefore better prepared for study or employment. The quality of the support provided for vulnerable students is outstanding. Such students are identified by the excellent team of diverse specialists and agencies such as the school nurse and the learning support team. Through a small transitional group, vulnerable Year 7 students are carefully introduced into the school. When they return to mainstream lessons, they continue to be monitored and there is a high success rate in keeping them engaged in learning. The work of the Social Development Team is rightly recognised by the school's support services as a model of outstandingly good practice. The team has made a major contribution to the reduction in exclusions, with students previously in danger of permanent exclusion now fully reintegrated within the curriculum.

The support for students with learning difficulties is good. The coordinator for special educational needs works closely with the primary schools to identify students who will need individual support. The information on the learning and social needs of students is collated, regularly updated and made available to all staff. Teachers make good use of this data when planning their lessons and this is effectively monitored through the use of a standardised lesson observation form.

To raise achievement at KS4, the school has developed its mentoring of students. It has initiated a very good scheme for gifted and talented students and is now developing a mentoring scheme for underperforming students across the school.

Students are given clear guidance on careers and further education options. The majority of Year 11 students stay on post-16.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 2**

#### **Grade for sixth form: 2**

Leadership and management of the school are good, with outstanding features. The headteacher's good communication and team-building skills ensure that all members of the school community contribute to the development of an inclusive ethos, where students feel valued and relationships are good. The headteacher, with the other members of the support and leadership team (SLT), has created a common sense of purpose in all staff and has provided a clear direction for developments. As a consequence, teachers with management and leadership roles know what they need to do in order to contribute to the school's success.

The SLT has successfully introduced a number of strategies to raise students' achievement. Programmes such as the broadening of the Key Stage 4 and post 16 curriculum to meet the needs of all students contribute to students' high expectations.



The school makes good use of data. Teachers are set challenging targets for the groups they teach.

Good monitoring and evaluation procedures involve middle managers as well as the SLT. Regular reviews influence departments' subsequent action plans. Teaching and learning are regularly monitored and evaluated against key criteria. Teachers receive detailed feedback and where support is necessary, this is readily provided. As some of the key criteria are regularly being met in lessons, it would be timely to consider the addition of new issues particularly those relating to learning and to assessing students' achievement.

The school's approach to the professional development of its teachers, teaching assistants and governors is outstanding. Participants in training have to evaluate its impact both on their teaching and the standards achieved by the students.

Governors are hardworking, committed to the school and focused on achieving excellence. They provide a good balance of challenge and support and act productively as 'critical friends'. There have been considerable improvements since the last inspection, for example in the very effective development of ICT. The school is well placed to improve further. Overall, the school provides good value for money and makes effective use of its resources and the accommodation. However, the right of way that runs through the site poses a safety issue for the school that cannot be wholly addressed through the use of security cameras.



## 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?	2	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2	2
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	2	2
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	

### Personal development and well-being

<b>How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	2	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1	
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	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>	1	1
<b>How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?</b>	2	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.

### 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	
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	2	
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2	
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2	
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2	
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**

I am writing on behalf of the inspection team to let you know the judgements we have made about your school. Thank you for taking part in the inspection by talking to us about your work, your life in school and all that you do.

- we believe your school is providing a good quality of education
- the headteacher and the staff have your best interests in mind. They work tirelessly to ensure that you are successful in all that you do
- you, through the school council and other groups, play an important part in improving the school and your ideas are acted upon
- you enjoy coming to school and participate well in lessons and the wide range of out-of-school clubs and extra activities
- in the lessons, you show positive attitudes to your work
- another key reason for your success is how well you are cared for
- the vast majority of you and your parents are very happy with the school and all that it offers.

We have asked your school to:

- determine how successful it is in ensuring your personal development and well-being and what impact this is having on your achievement
- give teaching and learning greater prominence in the school's development plan.