



Ridgewood Community High School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 135013
Local Authority Lancashire
Inspection number 294251
Inspection dates 6–7 March 2007
Reporting inspector John Atkinson

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

Type of school	Special	School address	March Street
School category	Community special		Burnley, Lancashire
Age range of pupils	11–19		BB12 0BU
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01282 433946
Number on roll (school)	155	Fax number	01282 839141
Number on roll (6th form)	14		
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Mr Geoffrey Kay
		Headteacher	Mrs Frances Entwistle
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected		

Age group	Inspection dates	Inspection number
11–19	6–7 March 2007	294251

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Ridgewood High School is a community school for students and post-16 learners with a range of learning difficulties. Some have additional physical, sensory and emotional difficulties. They are drawn from a wide range of social and economic backgrounds and 20% of the students and learners are from minority ethnic groups. The percentage of those entitled to free school meals is well above the national average. Twenty-nine students and learners do not have English as their first language. The local authority looks after six children. All have statements of special educational need. The school opened in September 2005 following the closure of three special schools. The school will move to new, co-located premises in 2009. It is part of a school sports partnership, networking with all other special and mainstream schools in the learning partnership.

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 gives good value for money. Since its opening, the headteacher and senior staff have led this new school well, establishing a clear sense of identity and direction. As a result, morale is high, staff are committed and there is a good capacity to improve further. Students and learners really enjoy coming to school, because they receive very good personal support and have excellent relationships with adults whom they trust and respect. The effect is that they grow in confidence and self-esteem and believe they are better placed to take advantage of training, education and employment opportunities.

The main strength of the school – and what underpins its other successes – is the positive, calm and purposeful ethos that exists. The effect is that students and learners feel safe, secure and willing to undertake new challenges. There is a high level of commitment to ensuring that each individual experiences an education that is personal to their needs and abilities. This is reflected in the school's good partnerships that lead to students and learners having access to opportunities and services provided by other schools and organisations. The school's very good sports partnership work results in students experiencing many inclusive activities with students from other schools.

While standards are low because of individuals' learning difficulties, students and learners achieve well with the majority making good progress even though some it is in very small steps. Although the school tracks students' progress using a nationally recognised 'small steps' approach, this information is not always used effectively by teachers to plan the next steps in students' learning.

Students make good progress in their personal, spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Staff prioritise the students' and learners' access to and enjoyment of the school's provision. This results in them becoming more independent and developing an appetite to participate in the wide array of learning, recreational and social opportunities available to them.

Attendance is good overall and the small numbers of long-term absences are due to medical and social reasons.

Overall, teaching and learning are good. Teachers and teaching assistants work very effectively as teams, leading to individuals receiving very good care and support with their learning. However the planning of learning activities for students with profound and multiple learning difficulties in Key Stages 3 and 4 lacks clarity about what individual students are expected to learn. Although they receive good care and support, students frequently follow the same activity and are not always challenged enough. The curriculum is good and ensures basic skills are learnt in an interesting way that motivates the students and learners. However, teachers' responses to students' achievements are inconsistent. Although praise is used well, opportunities are missed to guide students on how to improve.

Although the leadership team thoroughly monitors the work of students, some of the self-evaluation judgements are generous and are based on the progress the school

has made since its opening, and not on the actual standards being reached. The governing body provides very good support and challenge to the school, ensuring that high standards are maintained and finances are used effectively.

Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form

Grade: 2

Provision in the Further Education department is good and, given the very short time it has been in operation, this is a major achievement and testimony to the good quality of leadership and management. The curriculum is enterprising with a highly relevant range of courses that are available to meet the individual needs of students. Learners receive good guidance and support. They achieve well in accredited courses and develop the skills necessary to access college places, work experience and employment opportunities. Staff work effectively in leading students towards thinking positively about what they will do when they leave, resulting in students who are ambitious and rise to the high expectations that school has for them. Teaching is good. Provision is well managed and there is good capacity to improve further and build upon current successes.

What the school should do to improve further

- Make better use of assessment data to plan students' future learning.
- Give students and learners clearer guidance on how to improve their work.
- Ensure that the planning of learning activities for students with profound and multiple learning difficulties in Key Stage 3 and 4 is clear in what they are expected to learn.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

The large majority of students achieve well in the basic skills of communication, literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT). They make good progress against their individual targets. Progress is regularly tracked using a nationally recognised 'small steps' approach, although this information could be used more effectively in teachers' planning. Students achieve well in art and music, often achieving levels beyond those initially expected because of the innovative ways in which these subjects are taught. They also achieve well in PE where there is a strong emphasis on participating in team games and exercising regularly. By the time students are ready to leave school, they achieve good results in accredited courses including Assessment and Qualifications Alliance (AQA) examinations and GCSEs.

Further Education students with complex communication and learning difficulties make good progress, particularly when taught using specialist techniques including sensory experiences, symbols and pictures to structure their learning activities. Students whose first language is not English make good progress through the good support they receive.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

Students' personal, spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good both in the school and Further Education department. They are polite, considerate and confident. Behaviour is good because of a good school behaviour policy which is consistently applied by staff. Students know how to keep safe and healthy because of the help provided by school, especially during PSHE lessons and during informal discussions. Included in the many activities offered by the school are accreditation for food hygiene and individual help to enable students to travel to school independently. The students have a good range of exercise through PE lessons, the clubs held at lunchtimes and the play equipment provided at playtimes. They know about healthy eating and younger students are given milk to drink after play. Students make good contributions to the community. They raise money for charity, garden with a local allotment group, and join in two Excel Clubs provided by the Prince's Trust.

- Students are helped to look after one another and to take part in anti-bullying programmes. Students feel safe and happy at school because they know staff listen if there is a problem and act quickly to solve difficulties. Students are aware that the school takes account of their views and see themselves as playing an important part in improving their school. They understand the role of being a good citizen and are well prepared for their future roles by working collaboratively, attending work experiences and college courses and running mini enterprises.

Students and learners make good progress in their personal development, particularly in their economic well-being because of the very good work related and enterprise skills they develop.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

Teaching is good and leads to good gains in learning. Effective use is made of ICT to explain and demonstrate the expected learning outcomes. As a result students and learners are fully engaged and interested in the planned activities. Teachers and teaching assistants work very well together in establishing a very positive learning climate with good levels of support. Occasionally the teaching is not sufficiently challenging because what students are expected to learn is not clear enough. The planning of learning activities for students with profound and multiple learning difficulties in Key Stages 3 and 4 lacks clarity about what individual students are expected to learn. Although they receive good care and support, students frequently all follow the same activity and are not always challenged enough. The effective organisation of learning and management of behaviour are key factors in ensuring

that students make good use of the time available and are not distracted from what is planned.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

The curriculum is good. It meets statutory requirements and takes account of national initiatives; for example, the teaching of citizenship and work related learning. The curriculum in the Further Education department is good and provides a good range of highly relevant courses that build on the needs and interests of individuals. The curriculum is well planned across a wide range of subjects to make learning relevant and fun for the students. Sensory and auditory programmes are provided for those who need them, and fun literacy programmes are set to music in order to help others. Signing and picture exchange communication systems are also used to help some students understand in lessons and make choices. The curriculum also prepares students well for leaving school; some good lessons were seen where students prepared menus and cooked food for lunch. The curriculum is enriched by a good variety of clubs that are well attended, as well as through visiting speakers and trips out of school.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

The school is successful in providing an inclusive environment in which all students are treated with dignity and respect. There are good procedures in place to keep students safe and healthy. Care plans and individual education plans are regularly reviewed to ensure students' needs are being met. Child protection procedures are established and good links with outside agencies are available to ensure the care needs of all are met, including the most vulnerable students. Good resources, a variety of strategies and knowledgeable, sympathetic help from learning support assistants ensure that students receive good support. The arrangements for the safeguarding of students are good and the school works well with parents to ensure students are well looked after. Students are well informed about their future options and enjoy giving their opinions during annual reviews. Although students are given ample praise for their achievements, staff miss opportunities to inform them about how they can improve in what they are doing.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

Strong, collaborative leadership by the headteacher has brought together a new and united staff team who are committed to the vision for the school. She has the loyal

support of a talented leadership team who ensure that every part of the school is working effectively. The development of the new Further Education department has been well managed. All staff are successfully involved in taking responsibilities and promoting initiatives, illustrating the desire of the school to address the needs of all students and give the best opportunities possible. Governors have been equally effective in supporting the school by ensuring that appointed staff have the experience and expertise to implement the school's inclusive strategy and maximise each students' potential. The senior leadership team and the governors are working very well in planning the school's move to new premises in 2009.

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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>	School Overall	16-19
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	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	NA	NA

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	4	4
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

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2	
The behaviour of learners	2	
The attendance of learners	2	
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	2	
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2	

The quality of provision

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

¹ 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

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	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	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	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

Ridgewood Community High School

March Street

Burnley

Lancashire

BB12 0BU

8 March 2007

Dear Students

Thank you very much for making us so welcome when we came to visit your school. We were very impressed by your behaviour and attitude towards school and how you treated each other. You all seemed to enjoy school and were rightly very proud of your achievements. You impressed us with your determination to do your best. We are sure that this will pay off and that you will do well.

- We quickly discovered that you are an ambitious group of young people who enjoy a challenge and go on to do well after you leave. We know that the staff at the school also want you to be successful and they are the main reason that you have such a good time at school. We agree with you that you go to a good school where the staff are always there for you, giving you support and encouragement.

It is really important that you make the most out of the opportunities school provides for you because then you will be able to achieve your dreams.

We think that you can do even better if teachers give you more advice about how to improve and explain clearly in lessons what you are expected to learn. We have asked teachers to plan things carefully to meet everyone's different needs.

The most important thing is that you continue to be as positive and enthusiastic as you were last week. You all made us realise what can be achieved when you work hard, stay determined and enjoy school.

Best wishes

John Atkinson

Lead Inspector