

Ridge View School

Inspection report

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| Unique Reference Number | 119050 |
| Local Authority | Kent |
| Inspection number | 326933 |
| Inspection dates | 12–13 March 2009 |
| Reporting inspector | Jeffery Plumb |

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

The registered childcare, managed by the governing body, was inspected under section 49 of the Childcare Act 2006.

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| Type of school | Special |
| School category | Community special |
| Age range of pupils | 2–19 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number on roll | |
| School (total) | 98 |
| Sixth form | 20 |
| Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS | 0 |
| Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years | 0 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair | Anna Pritchard |
| Headteacher | Jacqui Tovey |
| Date of previous school inspection | 7 February 2006 |
| Date of previous funded early education inspection | Not previously inspected |
| Date of previous childcare inspection | Not previously inspected |
| School address | Cage Green Road Tonbridge TN10 4PT |
| Telephone number | 01732 771384 |
| Fax number | 01732 770344 |

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|--------------------------|------------------|
| Age group | 2–19 |
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Ridge View School provides for pupils with severe learning difficulties (SLD), profound and multiple learning difficulties (PMLD) and autistic spectrum disorders (ASD). All pupils except for 10 children in the Foundation Stage have statements for their special educational needs. Attainment on entry is well below the national average, reflecting the pupils' complex needs. The majority of pupils are from White British backgrounds. There are a few ethnic minority pupils and three are from homes where English is spoken as an additional language. All of these ethnic minority pupils, just like their peers from White British backgrounds, have communication difficulties related to their learning difficulties and/or disabilities. There are eight children in public care.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a good school. The senior leadership team works very effectively with health professionals to remove barriers to learning for pupils and to enable them to be as independent as possible. Very good positioning and adapted utensils enable a significant number of pupils to feed themselves with dignity. Feeding plans enable pupils to progress from pureed food to soft chopped food and to use modified utensils confidently. A programme focusing on enabling pupils to move independently is a significant success as evidenced by pupils propelling their wheelchairs around the school with confidence. Parents say, 'Our children really come out of themselves in this school. They receive encouragement from staff to be independent and to participate in all school activities at whatever level is appropriate for them as individuals.' However, parents say they would value more support from the school on how to accelerate their children's learning at home.

Achievement is good. All groups of pupils, assisted by a range of signs, symbols, switches and electronic communication aids, make good progress in communicating independent choices. Teachers plan effectively and teach good lessons which focus on the needs of each pupil. For some pupils, the focus is to position them so that they can lift their head in response to their teachers' voices or point their eyes at an object or picture in a book. For others, it is to enable them to read for a purpose and enjoyment and to develop the skills of telling the time, shopping using coins and weighing ingredients for cooking. Through science and information and communication technology (ICT) activities, pupils are given good opportunities to solve problems and think critically at a level appropriate to them. Pupils' life skills are developed well and achievement against the objectives on pupils' statements of special educational needs is good. The majority of pupils reach their challenging targets in English, mathematics, science and ICT demonstrating the good progress they make. Standards have increased year on year over the last three years. The curriculum is good and meets pupils' needs well. Pupils with autism have individual curriculum programmes which benefit them significantly. The school is currently developing individual curriculum programmes for pupils with SLD and PMLD.

Effective care, guidance and support underpin pupils' good personal development and well-being. Pupils are kept safe and they are very happy at school. Their good awareness of healthy lifestyles is supported by creative and innovative strategies, including using the hydrotherapy pool, off-site horse riding and a wide range of sporting activities. Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage who use wheelchairs are given many opportunities to develop independent mobility, but teachers are constrained in enabling them to further develop these skills in their outdoor play area because its surface is cracked and bumpy. Pupils' progress over time is tracked well and they are set challenging targets to raise their achievement. Leadership and management are good at all levels. Improvement since the last inspection has been good, as is the school's capacity for further improvement.

Effectiveness of the sixth form

Grade: 2

The school calls its sixth form provision further education (FE). There are three distinct groups (ASD students, PMLD students and SLD students) with curriculum packages designed to maximise their independence and prepare them for transition into independent day service provision or further education colleges. The leader of FE is new in post, but has made a good start in effectively managing the provision. Students make good progress in relation to their

individual learning programmes because of the good quality teaching they receive. Accreditation meets students' needs and celebrates their good achievements. Their gains in communication skills are good. They have access to a small flat and in relation to their capability make good progress in stripping a bed, using the washing machine and planning and cooking a meal. As far as is possible, all are included in these activities and students with SLD learn to shop using money and wait for their change. Assessment has recently been revised and is used effectively to plan to raise students' achievement. Good college links have been established and students with SLD experience courses in beauty/hairdressing, music and engage in an enterprise project. A few PMLD and ASD students experience an agricultural taster course at college.

Students' behaviour is good and they make good gains in independent movement around the school. They wrote their own code of conduct using symbols. The highest achievers follow Entry Level literacy and numeracy courses at college which benefit them significantly. They take responsibility for returning the register to the central office, taking messages and carrying out administrative tasks, such as photocopying. Leadership and management are good and there is a plan with clear priorities to improve the provision further. The care and support these students receive are outstanding.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children make good progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) and achieve well. Effective and sensitive support together with good teaching improves their communication skills significantly. Through making eye contact and developing the desire to be with somebody else, they begin to gain access to the world of others. For children with autism, this is a significant development. Due to skilful behaviour management and good planning, their behaviour improves as they engage with learning. The highest achievers request, without prompting, to use the toilet and manage to do so with little support. Children's independence is promoted well, particularly their physical development within the classroom and in the hydrotherapy pool where non-ambulant children enjoy movement to music. PMLD children begin to hold their heads up and a number of children begin to walk short distances without their walking aids. Skilful observations enable staff to build on children's interests to accelerate their learning. Children looking with amazement at the rain drops hitting the window are encouraged to put their 'macs' and 'wellies' on to go outside and enjoy playing in the rain. There is a good balance between teacher directed activity and child initiated play. Good use is made of their outdoor play area, but its uneven surface hinders further development of the good work done to promote their independent mobility as it is difficult for children in wheelchairs or for those who use walking aids to move around as freely and independently in this area as the staff would like. Assessment and relationships with parents are strong features. Leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage provision are good and significantly benefit the children. This is summed up by parents who say, 'Our children's speech has improved and their imaginary play has come along well since being in the Nursery.'

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the surface of the outdoor play area for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage to further enhance the good work the school does in promoting their independent movement.
- Increase the work done with parents so that they can better help their children with learning at home and so raise their achievement further.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Achievement is good. All groups of pupils make good progress in English, mathematics, science and ICT. They develop good communication skills. Many pupils with ASD move on rapidly in developing interaction skills as a result of the good one-to-one support they receive. They often independently seek out a peer or adult to engage with them in communication. Progress in reading is good, ranging from eye pointing to the highest achievers reading text for purpose and enjoyment. Many pupils with SLD attain standards in reading above those found typically for pupils with their learning difficulties. Writing for many pupils is difficult because of the complexity of their needs and poor hand control. Assisted by symbol computer programs, pupils with ASD and SLD begin to write independently. Some with good hand control progress well and write using a pencil and paper. All pupils experience practical mathematical activities to support them in their development of life skills. Higher achieving pupils with ASD and SLD learn to use coins for shopping. Through a sensory hands-on approach, all pupils are engaged with science. The highest achievers make good gains in their knowledge and understanding through carrying out investigations relevant to life, such as the connection between electricity and lighting a bulb and the importance of plugging a lamp into the mains socket.

Good positioning using specially adapted chairs together with modified utensils enable many pupils to eat independently and with dignity. Good joined up working between therapists and education staff support pupils in gaining independence in movement. Pupils propel their wheelchairs and use their walking aids independently as they make their way from their classrooms to the dining hall at lunchtime. The development of these important life skills maximize pupils' potential for independent living and give them dignity.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils enjoy school because learning is fun and challenging. Their joy in learning is evident on their gorgeous smiles in lessons. The school council makes a valuable contribution to improving the quality of provision for all pupils. For example, it has contributed to the school providing more interesting clubs during the lunchtime. An all inclusive physical exercise programme, including horse riding and dancing in wheelchairs, and careful attention to diets tailored to the needs of pupils promote their health well. Very good attention is paid to developing pupils' emotional health. Through all activities, pupils are encouraged to adopt safe practices. Pupils learn about money through shopping outings. The oldest higher achieving pupils, with support, have set up a company to run a tuck shop. Behaviour is good. Pupils with challenging behaviour are effectively managed. As their communication skills improve, their frustration subsides and their behaviour improves. Attendance is good. Authorised absence reflects treatment in hospital for pupils with severe medical conditions. The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils is good.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Lessons are well planned with activities matched to pupils' needs to accelerate their learning. Sensory resources are used well to enable pupils with PMLD to attend with their eyes and

communicate responses. The structured environment in classrooms for pupils with autism minimises distraction and promotes good concentration and learning. A particular strength is the way in which teachers and teaching assistants interact with pupils to elicit responses from them. Overall, expectations of what pupils can achieve are high and pupils respond well to the challenges they are given. A particular strength is the way in which pupils are enabled to respond using signs, pictures, switches, electronic devices and words through a lively total communication environment in each classroom. Teaching assistants are skilful in managing pupils' behaviour, but on rare occasions they move in too quickly to help pupils and so do not give them sufficient time to communicate an independent choice. In all lessons, good positioning of pupils using modified furniture removes barriers to learning for them. Good use is made of assessment to inform planning lesson by lesson so ensuring that pupils receive experiences to enable them to move forward with the next important step in their learning.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

Flexibly planned, the curriculum meets the needs of pupils well. Skills based, it promotes pupils' gains in relevant life skills effectively. It provides opportunities to improve their communication, movement, and their independence in learning. There is a structured approach for ASD pupils and a sensory curriculum for pupils with PMLD. These approaches accelerate learning for these groups of pupils. However, there is movement across planned programmes. For example, pupils with SLD who benefit from a structured approach can be included with a class for pupils with autism to raise their achievement. Therapy is integral to the curriculum. Stretching and massaging of pupils' hands prepares them to participate in activities such as cooking with increased independence. The hydrotherapy pool is used effectively to give pupils who cannot walk the freedom to move their limbs independently. Across all subjects, pupils are encouraged to develop independence. Provision for ICT is good and removes barriers to learning for pupils as they communicate using switches and engage with learning using computers. In particular, more cognitively able pupils with severe physical disabilities demonstrate their good understanding of what they learn using computers. The provision for personal, social, health and relationships education is good. Key Stage 4 pupils receive good supported and independent work experience within the school building. The curriculum is enriched by a good range of visitors and use of the outdoor environment to enhance pupils' learning. The school provides effective tailor-made individual curriculum programmes for pupils with autism which impact positively on raising their achievement. It is currently developing individual curriculum programmes for pupils with SLD and PMLD.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Links with a wide range of external agencies are effective and benefit pupils significantly. Effective partnership working between therapists and education staff remove barriers for pupils so that they develop independent feeding and mobility skills. Good induction procedures ensure pupils are settled in well when they join the school. A minority of parents say they would like more help from the school in supporting their children's learning at home. Transition arrangements when pupils leave the school are good. Care and support for pupils in public care are good. Child protection procedures meet government regulations. Risk assessments are thorough and detailed. The health and safety of pupils and staff are high priority. For example, regular checks are carried out on hoists used to lift pupils in and out of the hydrotherapy pool.

This ensures that the pupils are kept safe, but also protects the staff from injuring their backs. Systems for tracking pupils' progress are good. Data about pupil performance are used effectively and frequently to set challenging targets to raise pupils' achievement.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher provides a clear vision and direction which focuses on developing pupils' life skills and enhancing their opportunities to live as independently as possible. A dedicated staff team shares this vision, and works ceaselessly to remove mobility and communication barriers to learning for the pupils. However, there is room for improved communication with parents/carers to support them more effectively in helping their children to learn at home. Since the last inspection, significant improvements have been made to the curriculum, which have impacted positively on accelerating pupils' learning and raising their achievement. Subject leadership is good as evidenced in the good provision for science which was an identified weakness at the time of the last inspection. Self-evaluation is good and it feeds into planning to improve the provision. For example, analysis of performance data showed a few Key Stage 4 pupils were slowing in the progress they were making and this has resulted in immediate modifications to their curriculum. This has accelerated the learning of these pupils. Priorities on the school improvement plan are clear and focus on improving the curriculum and raising achievement. There is a good policy and detailed action plan in place to promote community cohesion. It is relevant to removing barriers to disability locally, nationally and internationally. Governance is supportive and effectively challenges the school's leadership.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

| | | |
|---|----------------|-------|
| Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate | School Overall | 16-19 |
|---|----------------|-------|

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 |
| Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection | Yes | Yes |
| How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well being? | 2 | 2 |
| The capacity to make any necessary improvements | 2 | 2 |

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

| | | |
|---|---|--|
| How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS? | 2 | |
| How well do children in the EYFS achieve? | 2 | |
| How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS? | 2 | |
| How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop? | 2 | |
| How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted? | 2 | |
| How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed? | 2 | |

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/or disabilities make progress | 2 | |

¹Grade 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.

Personal development and well-being

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

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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards | 2 | |
| The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation | 2 | 2 |
| How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated | 2 | |
| How well does the school contribute to community cohesion? | 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 | |

Annex B

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

13 March 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Ridge View School, Tonbridge, TN10 4PT

The inspectors enjoyed visiting your school and seeing all of the interesting and challenging work you do. We enjoyed speaking with you and are so pleased that you like coming to school.

We think your school is good. You are cared for well and make good progress in communicating your needs, feeding yourselves with confidence and moving about independently. You achieve well. You develop good life skills. Your behaviour is good. Your school helps you to keep fit and healthy and makes sure that you are safe. You are given good opportunities to have a say in how your school can improve what it does to make your enjoyment of learning even better. Your headteacher listens carefully to what you say and takes action to improve your school for you. Your headteacher and her dedicated staff team ensure that your school is well led and managed.

We have asked your headteacher to improve a few things so that your school becomes even better. We would like her to make sure that the surface of the outdoor play area for those of you in the Early Years Foundation Stage is made level so that those of you who move your wheelchairs by yourselves can get about more easily in this area. In addition, we have asked her to assist your parents and carers to better help you enjoy your learning at home.

Thank you for the lovely welcome you gave us when we visited you. Please help your headteacher in making your school even better.

Yours faithfully

Jeffery Plumb Lead inspector