

The Ridgeway School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	125805
Local Authority	Warwickshire
Inspection number	328402
Inspection dates	21–22 October 2008
Reporting inspector	Margaret Jones HMI

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.

Type of school	Special
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	2–13
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	94
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	8
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	0
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Heather Calver
Headteacher	Patricia Flynn
Date of previous school inspection	1 October 2005
Date of previous funded early education inspection	1 October 2005
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Montague Road Warwick CV34 5LW
Telephone number	01926 491987
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Age group	2–13
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and one Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

Ridgeway is a primary special school serving the central area of Warwickshire. The school changed nature in September 2007. It was formerly a 2 to 19 special school designated for pupils with severe learning difficulties. It is now a primary school for children with complex learning difficulties and disabilities. School-age pupils are admitted with a statement of special educational needs whilst a multi-disciplinary panel admits those in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) provision. The school has a rising roll and an increasing number of pupils are transferred to Ridgeway from mainstream placements which have broken down. A quarter of pupils are eligible for free school meals, and seven pupils are in Local Authority care. A small number of pupils are from minority ethnic backgrounds. Despite great uncertainty in recent years, plans are now well advanced for the school to move to a new building in 2010.

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, which has overcome a great deal of change and uncertainty in recent years, and maintained high achievement. Pupils are successfully helped to overcome their learning and behavioural difficulties, and their disabilities. Pupils arrive at the school with a variety of needs. However, the outstanding level of care and the consistent behaviour management systems in place enable pupils to make good progress in their personal development and in their learning. Attendance and behaviour are outstanding. Academic progress increases in relation to the time spent at the school because of strategies to manage behaviour, motivate pupils and engage them in their own learning. As one pupil remarked, 'we used to mess about but that does not help our learning'. Almost a third of pupils make such good progress in terms of learning and personal skills that they are able to attend mainstream school for part of their week. Parents are delighted with what the school does for their children and the results of the parents' questionnaire were overwhelmingly positive.

The quality of teaching and learning is good across the school and is reflected in the rapid progress pupils make. Teachers ensure a calm and orderly working atmosphere in their classes. This is due to the excellent relationships between pupils and adults, and ensures that pupils are keen to work and do their best. The occasional satisfactory lesson occurs when the short-term planning by class teachers does not match activities and resources closely to the needs of the differing abilities of the pupils and pace is slower. The curriculum is good and ensures pupils get a balanced programme. A wide variety of creative, sporting and enrichment activities complements the curriculum and means that pupils have a rich and exciting diet of a range of activities, which helps them to express and channel their emotions, and develops their self-esteem and learning skills.

The school is very well led and managed by the headteacher who is dedicated and determined. She has established a strong team of staff, who are very supportive of each other and enjoy working at the school. Good improvements have been made since the last inspection and the school has good capacity to improve further. Accurate self-evaluation and monitoring are carried out by the leadership team but the roles of middle managers in monitoring and setting targets for their own areas are less well developed. Governors play an increasingly active and informed role in the life of the school. However, the school does not fulfil statutory requirements in an important area. There is no record of a racist incidents book and no assessment has been done of the impact of the school's race equality policy.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

When children start, their skills are well below expected levels because of the severity of their learning difficulties, disabilities and medical needs. Staff work together well and plan children's individual learning effectively through exciting and inviting activities. Children make good progress especially in their personal, social and communication skills. Their excellent personal development is aided by the outstanding one-to-one attention they receive. Independence and self-esteem are skilfully promoted in a secure, positive environment where children, parents and staff are valued. The quality of care and nurture from the staff is good, so that children feel happy, settled and safe. However, they cannot easily have regular drinks of water. Colourful and exciting resources, such as an attractive role play pirate ship, encourage children to join in, whatever their level of difficulty. The outdoor learning area is inviting and is well planned

and organised to ensure children experience all the areas of learning. The good quality of the provision is a testament to the good teaching and effective leadership and management. The school is working to complete its EYFS assessment procedures to match the latest national guidance. An excellent partnership is swiftly established with parents who feel their children have a 'wonderful' start in the Nursery and Reception classes. One parent comments, 'This school has been so very important for our child and our family in terms of the educational, emotional and practical support. We cannot speak highly enough of the work done here.'

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the consistency of the quality of teaching by better use of short-term planning, better use of resources, including information and communication technology (ICT), and faster pace in lessons.
- Develop the roles of middle managers so they become more responsible for the achievement and quality of teaching in their areas.
- Fulfil statutory requirements by keeping a book to record racist incidents and conducting an assessment of the impact of the race equality policy.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Achievement is good, although standards in tests are well below average because of the nature of the pupils' learning difficulties and the disrupted experience of education many of them have had. Pupils are confident and express themselves well relative to their level of difficulty. They make rapid progress in core subjects, particularly science and mathematics, and a few reach Level 3 or even 4 of the National Curriculum. Achievement in literacy has dipped recently, but this has been quickly identified by the school and corrected by the introduction of two structured language lessons a week. Pupils' performance compared to similar special schools is very good. Good teaching enables pupils to make similar rates of progress across other subjects and this is carefully tracked using subject overviews. The school analyses the results of different groups of pupils over time and the data show that there are no significant differences in performance between different groups.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils show great delight and enjoyment in all aspects of school life. They say they love playing football, their friends and their teachers. Attendance is excellent, particularly when considering the impact of some pupils' severe medical needs. They feel safe, although the lack of a personal, social and health education (PSHE) and a citizenship scheme of work curtails some aspects of their personal development. Pupils like getting praise and rewards and they behave exceptionally well. They are very kind to each other and happily celebrate each other's achievements. Staff are very successful in creating an atmosphere of trust, where pupils are not confused or anxious and are able to cope with the challenges of new experiences or trying different foods. For instance, pupils learn to make healthy choices when selecting their school lunches. Pupils' good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development was evident in their recent Harvest Festival service at the local church. Pupils sang and signed harvest songs and performed to a large audience with enthusiasm, confidence and harmony. They are involved in school life both off and on site through involvement in the school council and local community projects, such as the 'Warwick in Bloom' competition. A third of the pupils enjoy spending part of their school

week in local mainstream nurseries and schools, which broadens their educational experiences. All pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teachers manage behaviour extremely well through positive reinforcement with very effective use of praise and encouragement. This gives pupils clear expectations for both behaviour and learning. Warm and productive relationships between teachers and pupils mean that pupils settle quickly and are ready to work. Teachers use a wide range of communication techniques in order to involve all the pupils in their class. For example, in an excellent Year 6 mathematics lesson, pupils moved to stand under the headings of units, tens and hundreds to answer questions and physically demonstrate place value. Teaching assistants provide skilled support for pupils' learning. Assessment and recording of pupils' progress are accurate and ongoing. Occasionally, lessons that are only satisfactory slow progress. This happens when lesson planning is less detailed, full use is not made of resources, including ICT, or some activities are too long for the concentration spans of the pupils.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The school has undergone a profound change from an all-age school to a primary school over the past year and because of this, it is in the middle of a curriculum review. Despite these changes, the quality of the curriculum remains good and, overall, meets the needs of the pupils. Long and medium term planning is in place and is effective. Social occasions, such as lunchtime, Harvest Festival and coffee mornings, are used very well for pupils to watch role models and practise their manners and good behaviour skills. There is a wide range of enrichment and out of school activities, which develop social skills and help to keep pupils fit and healthy. Social and emotional aspects of learning (SEAL) materials are beginning to be used across the school but there are no schemes of work for personal, social and health education or citizenship. The school is working towards the Healthy Schools award.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Staff know pupils and their families exceptionally well and are very successful in ensuring pupils are well cared for and kept safe. High staffing levels ensure that pupils are well supervised and supported at all times. There are excellent links with a wide range of external agencies such as social services and health professionals. Rigorous safeguarding procedures minimise risks to pupils and reassure parents, for example when pupils are going out on visits and when they are engaged in outdoor play. Very good admission and transition procedures include useful details of any benefits parents may be entitled to. Many pupils have high levels of dependency and require support with mobility, toileting or feeding. Such procedures are carried out sensitively and effectively with respect for pupils' dignity. There are good assessment systems to track pupils' progress. Year 6 pupils set some of their own personal and learning targets.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher and deputy headteacher have led the school exceptionally well through the changes to its age groups. They have built a strong senior leadership team, which in turn has helped to create a safe and happy environment where every individual is valued and encouraged to do their best. Subject co-ordinators are developing good skills and experience, although they do not monitor improvement using lesson observation and currently, due to the curriculum review, do not have departmental action plans or targets. The staff have been involved in a restructuring of monitoring and evaluation of the work of the school through subject overviews. The governing body has become more professional in its approach since the previous inspection. Governors have a good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school, and hold the school to account. Finances are well managed and the school is working towards achieving the Financial Management Standard. The school gives good value for money and is planning to use carry forward funding to provide outdoor equipment for the new building. The school makes a positive contribution to community cohesion through excellent links with parents, participation in local events and providing a range of outreach work for neighbouring schools. The school does not fulfil statutory requirements in one aspect of equality legislation because no assessment has been done of the impact of the school's race equality policy and there is no separate recording of racist incidents.

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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
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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
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well being?	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	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?	1
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
The standards ¹ reached by learners	4
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	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
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	1
The attendance of learners	1
The behaviour of learners	1
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
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	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	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	3
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
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**

23 October 2008

Dear Children

Inspection of Ridgeway School, Warwick CV34 5LW

- Thank you for all the help you gave us when we visited your school on 21 and 22 October. We enjoyed talking with you. Ridgeway is a good school. We thought you would like to know what was good about your school.
- The school is very well led by the headteacher and there is a good team spirit among the staff and governors, who want you all to do your very best.
- You are very happy in school and really enjoy your lessons; you come to school every day, behave extremely well and are kind to other pupils.
- You are making good progress in your schoolwork and in your behaviour.
- You like and respect your very good teachers and teaching assistants and work hard for them.
- You enjoy the good range of activities provided for you in and out of school hours.
- You told us that you feel safe in school and are well looked after; there is excellent care and support for all of you.
- How we thought it could get even better.
- Occasionally, lessons are a bit slow and better resources could be used to help you learn faster.
- Subject leaders should come into your lessons sometimes to see how you are getting on.

We wish all of you success in your studies and thank you once again for your help with this inspection.

Yours sincerely

Margaret Jones Her Majesty's Inspector