

Ridgewood High School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	103866
Local Authority	Dudley
Inspection number	336182
Inspection dates	10–11 May 2010
Reporting inspector	Deborah James

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Foundation
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	911
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr John Hodt
Headteacher	Mr Clive Nutting
Date of previous school inspection	27 March 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by five additional inspectors who visited 47 lessons, observed 47 teachers and held meetings with staff, groups of pupils and the Chair of the Governing Body. They observed the school's work and studied a range of documentation, including the school's improvement plan, minutes of governing body meetings, departmental monitoring evidence and records of students' progress. Inspectors also reviewed responses to questionnaires returned from students, staff and 266 parents and carers.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following:

- the progress made by students in lessons and the evidence held by the school to support their evaluation that all pupils are making satisfactory progress
- the effectiveness of the school's actions in improving the quality of teaching and learning
- whether recent improvements in attainment and progress in mathematics have been sustained
- the effectiveness of the school's actions in improving the attainment and progress of girls.

Information about the school

This larger than average secondary school gained specialist status for science in 2004. In 2008 it became part of the Stourbridge Educational Trust. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is broadly average. The majority of students are of White British heritage. The entitlement to free school meals is average. The school has gained the Healthy Schools Standard.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?**3****The school's capacity for sustained improvement****3**

Main findings

Ridgewood is a school where students are valued and well cared for. Students participate enthusiastically in the life of the school through a well-established student voice programme. Members of the student voice group work in partnership with teachers, senior leaders and governors on a wide range of issues. Students engage in an extensive range of creative arts and sporting opportunities. The school's extended provision in performing arts is a particular strength, with more than a third of students involved in major school productions.

The overall effectiveness of the school is satisfactory. Since the last inspection the school has made tangible progress in a number of key areas. Students now have good attendance and punctuality. Changes to the curriculum have made a significant contribution to students' motivation, enabling Key Stage 4 students to have greater success and find relevance in their learning. There have been significant improvements in the way that the school gathers and makes use of assessment information: this is now effective in highlighting underachievement and increasing staff expectations of the performance of all students, particularly girls. Subject and pastoral leaders are increasingly confident in using assessment data to develop focussed intervention strategies for individuals and groups of students. The rigorous monitoring of the academic performance of students in Year 11, together with the support for them if they fall behind, have been major factors in improving academic standards this year. This has been particularly evident in mathematics where an innovative intervention programme uses current and ex-students to mentor those at risk of underachievement. These changes demonstrate the school's satisfactory capacity for further improvement.

The school has put into place a number of strategies to improve the quality of teaching and learning and the positive impact of these was seen during the inspection. The proportion of teaching that is good or outstanding has increased but too much teaching remains satisfactory and students are not consistently supported to make good, rather than satisfactory, progress. Students learn best when teachers' expectations are clear and they engage with challenging tasks that interest and motivate them. In other lessons, students have too few opportunities to practise and develop new skills and teachers direct questions so that only a few students are required to respond. The quality of marking and feedback is inconsistent, with a significant amount of marking that is brief and infrequent.

The capacity of the school's leadership team has been considerably strengthened by the recruitment of new senior leaders and the restructuring of management roles and responsibilities throughout the school. Senior leaders have an accurate view of the school's current strengths and what needs to be done to bring about improvement.

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However, actions to bring about necessary change have not always been implemented quickly enough and, accordingly, they have had limited impact on improving students' achievement. The governing body has a good understanding of the school and uses this well to offer support and challenge. Governors have close links to faculties and well-developed systems to take account of the views of students.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Accelerate the rate of pupil progress by ensuring that, by December 2010, at least 60% of teaching is good or better and 10% outstanding through:
 - embedding and sharing existing good practice
 - ensuring that assessment data is used to plan fast-paced lessons that are well matched to students' different abilities
 - providing learning activities that motivate, challenge and actively engage students
 - improving questioning techniques so that teachers can assess accurately students' learning and adjust the lessons accordingly
 - ensuring that students know how well they are doing, and how to improve, through regular high quality marking and feedback.
- Increase the rigour of both whole-school and departmental monitoring systems so that underperformance in students' learning and the quality of teaching is picked up quickly and addressed.
- About 40% of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**3**

In 2008, the proportion of students gaining five good GCSEs including English and mathematics fell significantly and was well below national standards. This was mainly due to poor attainment in mathematics where too few students gained the expected level of grade C or better. The performance of girls was significantly below that of boys. School leaders carefully analysed the reasons behind students' underachievement and implemented appropriate strategies to tackle it. In 2009, the proportion of students gaining five good GCSEs including English and mathematics was in line with national attainment. The school's current assessment information and other inspection evidence provide convincing evidence that attainment will continue to rise this year. Attainment in science did not meet the specialist school targets in 2009 but changes to science courses and continuing action to improve the quality of teaching and learning have led to improvements this year.

The majority of students enjoy school. When offered suitably challenging activities in lessons they engage enthusiastically, supporting one another and working well independently. In less effective lessons, the pace of learning slows and a few students

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become restless and behave inappropriately. This considerable variation in teaching is the reason why all groups of students, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, make satisfactory rather than better progress.

Students are generally positive, friendly and keen to talk about what they are doing. During the inspection the vast majority of students behaved well in lessons and around the school. However, parent, staff and student surveys, and discussions with students, indicated that, on occasions, the poor behaviour of a small minority of students disrupts learning. The school has reviewed sanctions for poor behaviour and is making increasingly effective use of a student support room as an alternative to exclusion. Most pupils feel safe in the school but a small number of concerns were raised by both students and their parents about bullying and intimidation. However, students were confident that there are good networks in place, including a growing peer mentor programme, to support students who feel at risk. Students, through their student voice programme, have been actively involved in organising peer mentoring and participating in the development of a new behaviour management policy.

Students know how to stay healthy and the school encourages them to participate in a range of sporting activities. However, too few students currently follow recommendations on eating healthily and taking regular exercise. They understand right from wrong and have numerous opportunities, through the curriculum and enrichment activities, to debate moral issues. The school has strong and active links with schools in Gambia: these provide the focus for charitable fundraising activities and student and staff visits. Inspectors were impressed by an assembly where students who had visited Gambia gave a confident presentation that provided a very mature insight into the similarities and differences between British and Gambian culture.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	3
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	3
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	3
The extent to which pupils feel safe	3
Pupils' behaviour	3
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	3

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low.

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The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3

How effective is the provision?

Students are known to staff as individuals and a strong pastoral structure sustains a variety of support and intervention strategies. The school has good links with a number of outside agencies. The quality of care for vulnerable students is effective and there are many examples of the school helping students to achieve success against the odds. Mixed-age tutor groups, which are highly valued by the students, successfully promote responsibility and provide peer support. Transition arrangements from primary schools are well supported by visits from partner schools, through the specialist school links, to the school's Eco Centre.

Senior and middle leaders have worked hard to improve the quality of teaching and

- learning and the very large majority of lessons are now satisfactory or better. Teachers have good subject knowledge and relationships between teachers and students are strong. Most lessons are effectively planned so that students show interest in their work and make the expected progress. In the most effective lessons, teachers use a sequence of activities to challenge and motivate students, checking and developing their understanding with well targeted, probing questioning. Less successful lessons are characterised by teachers talking too much and giving students too few opportunities to work independently or with their peers. As a result, the pace of learning slows. Students are aware of their current performance and their target grades. In a few lessons these are used to ensure that students understand how they can improve their work and make further progress. Students are keen to acknowledge the extremely valuable feedback given through marking in some lessons. However, much marking is less useful, with a focus on presentation and completion rather than on prioritising the means by which learning can be improved.

The curriculum has undergone recent change in order to more effectively meet the needs of all learners. Key Stage 3 has been shortened to two years and the school has prioritised a number of initiatives to support students in developing better learning and study skills. At Key Stage 4, the focus has been on increasing the range of academic and vocational courses to motivate and engage all students. The curriculum has been enriched by partnership work aimed at extending vocational provision. The full impact of these curriculum changes has yet to be realised in student achievement. The programme of extra-curricular, enrichment and enhancement activities is a strong feature of the curriculum, adding to students' enjoyment and contributing to other aspects of their personal development and well-being.

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These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	3
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	3
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

Senior leaders are committed to raising achievement for all students through improved teaching, a more appropriate curriculum and high-quality individual support and intervention. The recent restructuring of roles and responsibilities has enabled greater support to be given to middle leaders who are now held more accountable for the progress of students within their faculties. Faculty leaders and teachers track the progress of students and have focussed their attention this year on delivering high-quality intervention activities for students who are not making the expected progress. Whole-school self-evaluation has identified appropriate areas for development and suitable plans have been put in place. However, the variation in the level of detail in faculty plans makes it difficult for leaders, including governors, to monitor the impact of new developments.

All requirements for the safeguarding of students were in place at the time of the inspection. The school has thorough systems for assessing risk and ensuring the health and safety of students and staff. Strong partnerships with a wide range of local agencies and volunteer groups are having a good impact on care and support of students, especially those who are vulnerable or have special educational needs and/or disabilities. There are a number of partnerships in place to enhance the curriculum and support developments in teaching and learning but their full impact is yet to be realised. Senior leaders ensure that parents and carers are well informed about their children's achievement and well-being.

Equality policies are in place and senior leaders analyse the academic performance of different groups of students. The recent underperformance of girls has been addressed effectively through curriculum changes and improved tracking and intervention. However, the school has less analysis about how different groups of students participate in extra-curricular activities and the broader life of the school. The school has a good understanding of its ethnic, religious and socio-economic context. Students from different backgrounds get on well together. Despite its excellent work on understanding international issues, the school is still in the process of developing its outreach work in the local community.

These are the grades for leadership and management

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The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	3
	3
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	2
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	3
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	3
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	3
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3

Views of parents and carers

Just over a quarter of parents and carers returned the inspection questionnaire. Of these, the great majority are happy with their children's experiences in the school. They agree that their children enjoy school and feel safe. There were a number of concerns raised about poor behaviour. Inspectors found that behaviour around the school and in lessons was satisfactory and, although there was some evidence of disruptive behaviour, the school was taking appropriate actions to deal with it.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Ridgewood High School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school. The inspection team received 266 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 911 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	59	22	172	65	33	12	1	0
The school keeps my child safe	55	21	202	76	7	3	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	74	28	162	61	27	10	2	1
My child is making enough progress at this school	75	28	158	59	29	11	3	1
The teaching is good at this school	56	21	171	66	32	12	5	2
The school helps me to support my child's learning	41	16	173	66	36	14	6	2
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	35	13	181	68	38	14	1	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	56	21	173	65	18	7	4	2
The school meets my child's particular needs	51	19	182	68	24	9	3	1
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	56	21	141	53	42	16	12	5
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	25	9	176	66	29	11	4	2
The school is led and managed effectively	40	15	167	63	34	13	5	2
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	62	23	170	64	25	9	5	2

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools

	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
Type of school	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	51	45	0	4
Primary schools	6	41	42	10
Secondary schools	8	34	44	14
Sixth forms	10	37	50	3
Special schools	32	38	25	5
Pupil referral units	12	43	31	14
All schools	9	40	40	10

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above is for the period 1 September to 31 December 2009 and is the most recently published data available (see www.ofsted.gov.uk). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn term 2009 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement. ■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils. ■ The quality of teaching. ■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships. ■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



Wednesday 12 May 2010

Dear Students

Inspection of Ridgewood High School, Stourbridge, DY8 3NQ

Thank you for the warm welcome you gave the inspection team when we visited your school recently. We enjoyed being in your lessons and talking to you and were impressed with the maturity with which you answered our questions. Yours is a satisfactory school that is showing clear signs of improvement and you are rightly proud of it.

These are the main findings of the inspection.

You participate well in the life of the school through innovative student voice activities and your engagement with extra-curricula sport and performing arts.

Your attendance is good and the school values you and looks after you well.

Some teaching is good but many lessons do not allow you sufficient opportunities to develop and practise new skills.

As a result of improved teaching and additional support from staff, you are now making expected progress.

Marking does not always give you clear information on what you have achieved and how you can improve.

Senior leaders have made progress in improving your school since the last inspection. However, some changes have not taken place quickly enough and further changes are needed.

We have asked the school to make the following improvements.

Make sure that more of your lessons are good or outstanding, with better marking and more motivating learning activities so that you make better progress.

Improve the systems that school leaders use to monitor the quality of teaching and your progress so that underperformance is picked up quickly and appropriate interventions are introduced promptly.

We would like you to help your school by continuing to work hard and behave well.

We wish you every success in the future.

Yours sincerely

Deborah James

Lead inspector

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