

Ridgeway School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	109742
Local Authority	Bedford
Inspection number	337361
Inspection dates	9–10 March 2010
Reporting inspector	Margaret Jones HMI

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

Type of school	Special
School category	Community special
Age range of pupils	3–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	68
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	16
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Neil Walker
Headteacher	Mr Graham Allard
Date of previous school inspection	1 November 2006
School address	Hill Rise Kempston Bedfordshire
Telephone number	01234 402402
Fax number	01234402410
Email address	ridgewaysp@deal.bedfordshire.gov.uk

Age group	3–19
Inspection dates	9–10 March 2010
Inspection number	337361

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, work-based learning and skills training, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It rates council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 08456 404045, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may copy all or parts of this document for non-commercial educational purposes, as long as you give details of the source and date of publication and do not alter the documentation in any way.

Royal Exchange Buildings
St Ann's Square
Manchester M2 7LA

T: 08456 404045

Textphone: 0161 618 8524

E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk

W: www.ofsted.gov.uk

© Crown copyright 2010

Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and one additional inspector. A large proportion of time was spent looking at learning; 17 lessons were observed and seven teachers and two nursery nurses seen; meetings were held with groups of pupils, the chair of governors, staff and the headteacher from the nearby secondary school. The inspectors observed the school's work, and looked at the school's policies, monitoring systems, school improvement plan, staff and pupil questionnaires and 27 parental questionnaires.

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

- the achievement of different groups of pupils.
- the impact of the creative curriculum introduced last year
- the monitoring and self-evaluation of the school's work.

Information about the school

Ridgeway is a school for pupils with physical disabilities and associated complex learning and medical needs. It serves Bedford Borough and Central Bedfordshire but also takes pupils from further afield if parents express a preference for a placement. Around a quarter of pupils are from minority ethnic backgrounds with the largest group from Pakistani families. Just under a quarter of pupils are eligible for free school meals. Attainment on entry is significantly below average, although there is a wide range of ability. All pupils have a statement of special educational needs. A high proportion of pupils are non-verbal communicators and the school offers expertise in alternative and augmentative methods of communication using information and communication technology. The school has achieved healthy Schools status and the financial management in schools award.

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?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

This is a good and improving school. The outstanding level of care provided helps pupils to successfully overcome their complex learning and physical difficulties so that they make good progress in their learning, and excellent progress in their personal development and social skills. Pupils enjoy their lessons and achieve well, developing communication skills and skills for independent living. They are encouraged to make decisions for themselves and express their own opinions. However, attainment remains below the national average because of the nature of the learners' special educational needs and disabilities. Behaviour is outstanding and pupils show each other kindness and consideration. Pupils know how to keep themselves healthy and safe and they are keen to volunteer to take on responsibilities around the school such as raising money for charity.

The school is a very caring and inclusive community where learners feel safe and secure. The consistent routines and high-quality behaviour management strategies are used to reduce stress levels for pupils and enable them to concentrate on their work. The quality of teaching is good with some outstanding, and staff are committed and dedicated. Effective use is made of skilled teaching assistants to give individual attention where needed. Very occasionally the pace of learning is too slow and the most able pupils are not sufficiently challenged. Regular monitoring of teaching and learning takes place but it is not rigorous enough to enable all teaching to reach the quality of the best. The highly personalised curriculum is relevant to the different learning needs of pupils, with sufficient emphasis on basic skills; literacy, numeracy and computer skills combined with appropriate emphasis on different forms of communication and sensory experiences.

The school is well led and managed. The leadership team has created a happy and hard working school with high expectations where every individual is valued and encouraged to do their best. The role of the governing body has improved since the last inspection and governors are now more questioning and strategic in their approach. Parents are kept well informed and involved with the work of the school. Partnerships with local schools are outstanding and have brought benefits and opportunities both for pupils and staff at this school and at the partner schools.

The school gathers data about the progress made by individual pupils but has been slow in collating and analysing this data so it can be used to make useful comparisons with national benchmarks. However, plans are in place to improve these systems. The school knows its strengths and is accurate in its self-evaluation and what it needs to do to continue to improve. There is a cogent school improvement plan in place and the capacity for future improvement is good.

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

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise level of achievement by:
 - collating rates of progress not just at individual level but by analysing the progress of different groups and comparing rates of progress over time
 - introducing more streamlined and consistent assessment practices across the school
- Improve the quality and consistency of teaching to that of the best lessons by ensuring monitoring is more rigorous and detailed.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Year 11 pupils and post-16 students were successful in obtaining entry level certificates in 2009 and pupils in Key Stage 2 achieved Levels 3 and 4 in National Curriculum tests in English and mathematics.

Pupils across the school are developing good physical skills and practical cookery skills; they are learning to use computers, and they produce outstanding art work.

Pupils make good progress in lessons whatever the nature of their special needs and/or disabilities. Pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds make similar rates of progress to other pupils.

Pupils feel safe in school and have the confidence to turn to an adult for help with any concerns.

Pupils' behaviour around school and in lessons, their attitudes to their work and the respect they show to their classmates and to adults are outstanding.

Pupils have a good understanding of how to keep themselves healthy and they take advantage of the wide range of exercise-related activities offered to them by the school. The take-up of school meals is high. Pupils willingly undertake jobs around the school and many take part in the school council.

The attendance of a large proportion of pupils is good though a small minority have poor attendance, partly due to medical conditions.

The progress made in developing skills in literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology, together with opportunities in Key Stage 4 and post- 16 to experience the world of work, prepare pupils well for life after school.

Pupils know the difference between right and wrong. They mix well and are highly supportive of each other. Spiritual and cultural development is extended through the high quality art work and music they experience.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

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

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	*
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
The extent to which pupils feel safe	1
Pupils' behaviour	1
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	1
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1

How effective is the provision?

Relationships between staff and pupils are outstanding. The staff know pupils well and focus throughout on respecting the pupils and fostering their independence and their right to choose different options.

Lessons are well-prepared and planned effectively, so that the tasks match the wide range of ability in the class and there are enjoyable, interesting activities for pupils. For example, in a Key Stage 3 science lesson pupils were able to experience for themselves the effects of pollution by pouring cooking oil onto plastic ducks. Teachers make good use of different systems: information and communication technology, signs and symbols to encourage communication with pupils who are non-verbal.

Excellent use is made of well-trained and skilful teaching assistants and nursery nurses who give individual support and enable all to participate in the learning process.

The best lessons have a sense of pace and challenge. Very occasionally, in a few lessons activities carry on for too long, pupils lose concentration and the most able pupils are not sufficiently challenged.

Teachers track pupils' progress but the methods used for assessment and tracking are not efficient or consistent across the school.

The move to a creative curriculum in September 2009 has been successful in providing

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

* In some special schools inspectors do not make a judgement about attainment in relation to expectations of the pupils' age.

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

more cohesive, interesting and enjoyable learning for pupils but it is too soon for its impact on learning to be fully evaluated.

Partnership with the local secondary school and local colleges is outstanding and provides useful experience of mainstream education for those pupils who are able to benefit from it.

Parents are pleased with the care the school provides. There is very effective support for children who are joining the school and for pupils moving classes at the end of the year. A range of guidance is provided for older pupils in conjunction with the Connexions service to help pupils make choices about their futures.

A wide range of support and care is provided to meet pupils' personal and medical needs by well-trained and qualified staff. Pupils are treated with unfailing concern for their dignity and sense of identity.

External agencies are used effectively to provide specialist help when required.

The school effectively monitors the attendance of pupils and provides work, where appropriate, for pupils who are absent long-term for medical reasons.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
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	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher has a clear vision for improving achievement. He has built a close knit, dedicated team who all work together well for the benefit of the pupils. Despite some recent staffing difficulties, teachers have taken on extra responsibilities and carried them out well to ensure the smooth running of the school.

The school has a range of appropriate policies to cover the different elements of safeguarding and welfare and meets all statutory requirements.

The governing body is developing a more challenging and strategic role in order to better hold the school to account.

Tracking and assessing progress, gathering and the use of data to bring about improvement are not consistent across the school.

Equal opportunities are promoted well and the school has a very good understanding of pupils' individual needs. However, no formal assessment of the impact of these policies has been carried out by the governing body.

The school provides good value for money and has used available funds to improve provision.

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

The school makes a good contribution to community cohesion through, for instance, outreach work to help other schools and by fostering links with students in South Africa.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
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	1
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children arrive with starting points that are well below average. They make good progress because learning is exciting and stimulating and they are helped to work independently. They settle well at school as the result of the excellent links established with parents. The good range of interesting resources makes playtimes and lessons fun. The leadership of Early Years Foundation Stage is good and has ensured that planning of activities is well focused on the needs of each individual child and that clear priorities have been set for improvement. The provision for the children's welfare needs is outstanding. At present there is no separate outdoor area for the children but there are plans to develop this in the future.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
Taking into account: Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2

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

Sixth form

Students make good progress in the sixth form and many achieve external accreditation in a range of examinations and grow in maturity and confidence. All students leave to go on to training or education placements. This is as a result of good quality careers education and preparation for work courses. A strong feature is the links with local colleges where students are able to spend part of the week studying a wide range of vocational courses to suit their individual needs. Lessons in school are stimulating and practical, and help to prepare students for independent life. Leadership and management are good and teachers keep records of students' progress and meet regularly to discuss this. However, results are not collated or analysed so that comparisons can be made year on year.

These are the grades for the sixth form

Overall effectiveness of the sixth form	2
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for students in the sixth form	2
The quality of provision in the sixth form	2
Leadership and management of the sixth form	2

Views of parents and carers

The overwhelming majority of parents feel that their children enjoy school, make progress and are well looked after. Inspectors' observations support these views. As one parent writes, 'My son feels very safe, well-cared for and finds the work challenging. He feels very positive about school and is always in a rush in the mornings. As a parent I feel very happy and satisfied with Ridgeway'.

A very small minority of parents express concern about progress and communication with the school but inspectors saw no evidence to support these concerns.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Ridgeway 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 27 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 68 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	20	74	7	26	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	24	89	3	11	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	18	67	9	33	0	0	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	19	70	7	26	1	4	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	21	78	6	22	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	18	67	8	30	1	4	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	18	67	9	33	0	0	0	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)	16	59	7	26	1	4	3	11
The school meets my child's particular needs	19	70	7	26	1	4	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	18	67	7	26	0	0	1	4
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	18	67	7	26	2	7	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	21	78	6	22	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	19	70	8	30	0	0	0	0

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 inspected between September 2007 and July 2008

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	39	58	3	0
Primary schools	13	50	33	4
Secondary schools	17	40	34	9
Sixth forms	18	43	37	2
Special schools	26	54	18	2
Pupil referral units	7	55	30	7
All schools	15	49	32	5

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 were reported in The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills 2007/08.

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.



Thursday 11 March 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Ridgeway School, Bedfordshire, MK42 7EB

Thank you for all the help you gave us when we visited your school on 9 and 10 March. We enjoyed talking with you. Ridgeway is a good school. We thought you would like to know what was good about your school.

You are very happy in school and really enjoy your lessons; you behave well, are polite and friendly and kind to others.

You are making good progress in improving your communication skills and developing self-confidence.

You work hard and make good progress in your schoolwork. Many of you do really well in your examinations.

You told us that you feel very safe in school and are very well looked after; there is excellent care and support for all of you.

The school is very well led and managed, and works in an outstanding way with local schools.

Teaching is good. You like and respect your teachers and teaching assistants.

You enjoy the good range of sports, arts and other activities provided for you in school and at lunchtime.

This is how we thought the school could get even better:

If teachers all used the same system to record how well you are getting on and used this to make comparisons with pupils in other schools.

If senior teachers checked what was happening in lessons more and shared the good practice.

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

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaining about inspections', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk. If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 08456 404045, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.