

The Ridgeway Community School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	125471
Local Authority	Surrey
Inspection number	340771
Inspection dates	16–17 September 2009
Reporting inspector	Kay Charlton

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	2–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	95
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	21
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Les Collyer
Headteacher	Mr Darryl Morgan
Date of previous school inspection	4 December 2006
School address	14 Frensham Road Farnham Surrey GU9 8HB
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 17 lessons, and held meetings with pupils, staff, governors, health professionals and parents. They observed the school's work, and looked at planning, assessment, the school improvement plan, safeguarding procedures and many other policy documents. Questionnaires completed by parents, pupils and staff were analysed, as well as pupils' records. Questionnaires were sent to the parents and carers of all pupils on roll and 45 were returned.

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

- The effectiveness of teaching in ensuring that all groups of pupils achieve of their best, with a sharp focus on gifted and talented pupils, Reception and the off-site sixth form provision.
- The effective use of information and communication technology (ICT).
- The success of the school in ensuring improvements in pupils' behaviour and attendance.
- The impact of leadership and management at all levels in contributing to the school's improvement.

Information about the school

The Ridgeway Community School is a special school catering for pupils with severe or profound and multiple learning difficulties. All pupils either have a statement of special educational needs or are in the process of having one drawn up. They come from a wide area, including a number of high dependency residential care homes catering largely for inner London boroughs. The great majority of pupils are of White British heritage and others are from a range of ethnic backgrounds. None speaks English as an additional language. The school operates on three sites that include a purpose-built nursery, based on a nearby primary school campus, and accommodation at Farnham College for those sixth form students who can manage this level of independence. Provision for the Early Years Foundation Stage comprises the Nursery, which currently caters for seven children aged two and upwards on a part-time basis, and one full-time Reception class for children aged four and five. The school has a number of awards, including the Healthy Schools, Sports Mark and Parent Partnership awards.

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?

1

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

This is an outstanding school where pupils enjoy their lessons and achieve extremely well. All pupils gain a range of national accreditation by the time they leave. Even though the standards they attain are well below those in mainstream schools, these represent excellent progress given pupils' very low starting points on entry. Parents are overwhelmingly positive about the school. Comments such as, 'This is an excellent school where my daughter's needs are always met' sum up their views. The quality of teaching and the curriculum is excellent, with innovative practice in the use of the school's specialist interactive learning environment. In here, pupils have opportunities to take part in simulated experiences as wide-ranging as visiting a mosque or swimming under the sea. The exceptionally strong partnerships with parents, health professionals and a wide range of schools, colleges and other providers enrich the already very high level of support for pupils and increase their understanding of the world of work and life beyond school. Staff assess each pupil's needs meticulously and they tailor the provision very carefully to meet them. This ensures that all have equal opportunities to achieve.

A key factor in the school's success is the respect that all members of the community show to pupils, whose personal development is outstanding. Pupils' behaviour, confidence and independence improve dramatically from first entering the school and, overall, these are excellent. There is a calm working atmosphere and lessons proceed smoothly. Pupils are very keen to come to school and their attendance is above average. The school is extremely supportive of all pupils and ensures that they receive a very high level of individual care and attention so that, if difficulties arise in their personal circumstances, they do not fall behind in their education.

The senior leadership team has extremely high expectations of staff and pupils and sets ambitious targets, based on rigorous and honest self-evaluation. The constant pursuit of excellence, driven strongly by the headteacher and very ably supported by the deputy headteacher, is an outstanding feature of the school. As a result, marked improvements have taken place in many areas, including in pupils' achievements, the quality of teaching and assessment, the curriculum, the Early Years Foundation Stage, the sixth form and in the extent to which leaders at different levels, particularly subject leaders, take responsibility for their areas. Governance is good. The governing body is rigorous in ensuring pupils and staff are safe and that all statutory requirements are met. They are clear about the strengths and weaknesses in the provision. They are aware, however, that they are not sufficiently rigorous in holding the school to account when checking pupils' progress and that there is still further to go in their duty of promoting community cohesion at a national and global level. With the commitment of staff and governors to wanting the very best for the pupils, the school is well placed to sustain its high level of

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improvement in the future.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that governors fully hold the school to account and secure sustained improvement by: - checking rigorously that pupils' progress is as good as it possibly can be - making sure that the school's plans to extend its work in community cohesion are implemented.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

1

Pupils' excellent achievements are the result of pupils working hard and concentrating very well in their lessons. They thoroughly enjoy school and this is evident from when they first enter school each morning with smiles on their faces to the way in which they approach their activities. Pupils' relationships with staff are outstanding and an atmosphere of trust allows them to respond very positively to staff's very high expectations. Consequently, throughout the school, virtually all pupils achieve their challenging targets, and many exceed them. The school caters for individuals and so pupils of different abilities, including those who are gifted and talented, achieve extremely well.

Pupils' outstanding spiritual, moral, social and cultural development underpins their academic progress. Pupils with different needs and backgrounds work together very effectively and respect each others' differences, as seen in an excellent Year 10/11 mathematics lesson. They know what is right and wrong and develop a keen sense of justice and fairness. Moments of reflection are used very well indeed by pupils, as seen in an assembly about the beauty of autumn. Pupils feel safe in school and turn readily to adults when in need of support. They understand how to choose a healthy lifestyle and take an active part in physical and sporting activities. This is recognised by the Healthy Schools and Sports Mark awards. Pupils make an excellent contribution to school life through the school council and they know that their views are listened to and acted upon, for instance in refurbishing the dining area. They link very successfully with the wider community and make an excellent contribution to helping others, for example in the support that they give to the elderly living in nearby sheltered accommodation. Pupils develop their personal and basic skills extremely well and this ensures that they are very effectively prepared for their future well-being. As a result, all move on to a placement in either the world of work or further education once they leave school.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

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

² IE - denotes that insufficient evidence was available to inspectors for a judgement to be made.

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Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	1
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	IE ²
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	1
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	1
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	1
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	2
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1

How effective is the provision?

Staff have very high expectations of pupils. They plan meticulously and use resources, such as ICT, very well to support pupils' communication and to create an excellent atmosphere for learning. There has been improvement in the ways in which staff use communication strategies so that they engage extremely well with pupils using a range of techniques, for example signs and symbols. A good example of this was seen in an excellent Year 1 literacy lesson. Staff work very well as a team and support staff are usually very effective and contribute skilfully to the quality of teaching and learning. Accurate assessment is used to set challenging targets for individuals and ensure that all pupils, including those who are gifted and talented, are extended in their learning. Increasingly, pupils are involved in helping to set their own targets and this is having a very positive impact. Tracking systems to check the pupils' progress are rigorous and teachers are held accountable appropriately to ensure pupils meet their targets.

The curriculum is personalised to meet pupils' needs with a flexible programme of therapies, such as music and play therapy, tailored very carefully to each individual. It emphasises communication, literacy, numeracy and ICT which, together with a strong work-related programme, very effectively support pupils' future well-being. Personal development is given high priority and as a result, pupils' attitudes to learning improve rapidly once they join the school. The school provides a very wide range of enrichments through its work in the performing arts, many outside visits (a number of which are residential), and visitors to school. All of these play a vital part in increasing pupils' enjoyment of school. Work undertaken in the school's interactive learning environment is of exceptional quality, as was seen when staff really made the story of 'Handa's

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Surprise' come alive alive for the pupils.

The Parents as Partners award recognises the quality of the school's work in encouraging parents to be fully involved in their child's education. Parents value the close links that provide support not only to their child but also to them. As one commented, 'I wish we had had The Ridgeway much, much earlier'. The Working to Integrate School and Home (WISH) project is highly effective in improving and supporting parents' and pupils' lives if a particular need arises. Homework supports pupils' learning very effectively. Pastoral care is very strong and the school works tirelessly to develop pupils' self-esteem and help them stay safe and healthy. Strategies to improve behaviour and attendance are extremely successful. Vulnerable pupils are carefully monitored and supported. Pupils are closely supported when joining or leaving the school, and are given very good guidance for the next steps in their educational lives. The school does its utmost to help them make well-informed life and educational choices.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	1
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	1
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	1
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

The driving force behind the school's success is the very high quality of leadership provided by the senior leadership team. The headteacher gives outstanding direction for the work of the school and, along with very good subject leaders, has ensured that significant progress has been made in improving the quality of teaching and learning since the last inspection. As a result, pupils now make excellent progress and their achievements have improved. At the same time, they continue to develop outstanding personal qualities. This transformation has been possible because of the rigorous monitoring of provision, based on the data provided by the very effective system for recording the assessments of pupils' progress. The governors make good use of their skills and experience when monitoring aspects of the school's effectiveness, for example with regard to spending decisions. However, they are not always sufficiently challenging when checking pupils' progress. Excellent attention is paid by all leaders in ensuring the highest quality of safety and care for the pupils. There are, for example, rigorous procedures for ensuring the safeguarding of pupils. Senior leaders, supported very well by all staff, are very effective in promoting equality of opportunity for all pupils across all aspects of the school's work.

The school shows a clear commitment to promoting cohesion within and outside the

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school community. It has undertaken an audit of the impact of its work in this area and there are plans to develop aspects further. The school's understanding of its own community, particularly through its strong links with others, is very effective. Pupils act as ambassadors for those with learning difficulties very well and they have made their views known to Parliament and other national institutions. Even so, the school is only just beginning to promote community cohesion as well as it might at both a national and global level.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	1
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	1
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	1
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	1

Early Years Foundation Stage

The very youngest children get off to a flying start in their education because of the very high quality of provision in both the Nursery and the Reception classes. They make excellent progress in all six areas of learning and particularly in their personal development. All make huge gains in developing their confidence and independence. They learn to make choices very effectively. A good example was seen when one of the nursery children chose the Incy Wincy Spider song for the whole class to sing at the end of the morning session. In Reception, children choose the activities in which they want to participate with a high degree of independence and also a clear understanding of daily routines. Children make very good progress in learning to express their ideas, for example when making marks on a computer touch screen. They gain clear awareness of number, shape, space and measures, widen their knowledge and understanding of the world and develop their creativity very well. Children's physical development is particularly good because of the regular opportunities they have to swim and the high level of support they receive from a range of therapists.

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The provision is particularly effective because of the very high quality of teaching. Staff match children's learning exceptionally well to their individual levels of understanding. The children in the Nursery also benefit greatly from being fully included with children in a mainstream setting. In both the Nursery and Reception, staff are skilled at providing a wide range of high quality activities, both indoors and out, that challenge the children to make choices and investigate. They are highly adept at picking up on and developing spontaneous situations to challenge children's thinking. This was noticeable during the Gingerbread Man Story in the Nursery and during snack time in the Reception class. Assessment across the Early Years Foundation Stage is detailed and guides the adults' questioning very effectively so that they extend children's understanding. Staff provide excellent support and guidance to the children and provision for their welfare is second to none.

Leadership is excellent and has ensured very good improvement in the Early Years Foundation Stage since the last inspection. There are clear plans in place to improve the already very good opportunities for outdoor learning. Parents are highly involved as partners in their children's education and say that they are extremely pleased with the provision.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	1

Sixth form

Sixth-form students are excellent role models for the rest of the school. All, including those in the off-site provision, make outstanding progress and gain a range of national accreditation by the time they leave. The exemplary care and support enjoyed by students up to Year 11 continue into the sixth form so that all have every opportunity to achieve. Students appreciate the ready help and guidance that they receive from staff, who inspire confidence through their positive approach. As a result, students' behaviour is excellent, and their learning is enthusiastic, sharply focused and highly effective.

Students benefit from an excellent curriculum that affords them much choice, with a key focus on the development of lifeskills and also the basic skills of literacy, numeracy and ICT. They enjoy the opportunities offered through the Duke of Edinburgh award scheme. Learning about the world of work is very well organised and students are very enthusiastic to take a full part in the wide range of opportunities offered, for example in local businesses. An exemplary range of enrichment activities, including clubs and visits, one of which is a ski trip abroad, enhance the provision very well. The leadership of the

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sixth form is extremely effective, and students' contribution to the community, both within the school and locality, is excellent. They are actively involved in a wide range of activities, such as the school council. A good example beyond the school is in helping to design a local parks area so that there is full access for disabled and wheelchair users.

These are the grades for the sixth form

Overall effectiveness of the sixth form	1
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for students in the sixth form	1
The quality of provision in the sixth form	1
Leadership and management of the sixth form	1

Views of parents and carers

Just under one half of the parents and carers responded to the Ofsted questionnaire. Their responses are overwhelmingly positive about all aspects of the school. Very few raised any queries and the inspection findings answer these. Parents indicate that they are very happy with their child's experience at this school. They are also extremely positive about the leadership and management.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at The Ridgeway Community 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 12 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 45 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 95 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	27	60	18	40	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	35	78	10	22	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	29	64	16	36	0	0	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	21	47	22	49	0	0	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	32	71	13	29	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	27	63	16	37	0	0	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	28	64	15	34	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)	23	52	17	39	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	31	69	13	29	0	0	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	30	68	11	25	1	2	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	23	51	20	44	0	0	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	39	89	5	11	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	39	87	6	13	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.



18 September 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of The Ridgeway Community School, Farnham GU9 8HB.

Thank you for making us so welcome when we visited your school. We came to the school to see how it was working and how well you are doing. We were very pleased with what we found because Ridgeway is an outstanding school.

Teaching is outstanding, and you learn very well indeed. For many of you, behaviour is greatly improved and we judged it to be excellent. Your school provides you with a first-class education and the care, support and guidance you receive are excellent. The staff have very high expectations of you and we could see that you try hard to reach your targets. The atmosphere in school is brilliant and you told us that you enjoy each day. The staff work hard to make sure you are safe and healthy. You are given a very interesting range of things to do, such as the football club, many visits out, including some where you stay away from home, and also special projects, such as the Creative Arts week.

The school is extremely well led and managed. The staff are very keen to do their best for you and to develop the school even further. Governors do a good job and we have asked them to check even more carefully that all of you are doing as well as you possibly can. We have also asked them to make sure that the school develops wider links to help you gain understanding of the lives of others even further afield.

Yours faithfully

Kay Charlton

Lead Inspector

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