

Ridgewood Community High School

Inspection report

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| Unique Reference Number | 135013 |
| Local Authority | Lancashire |
| Inspection number | 341598 |
| Inspection dates | 14–15 October 2009 |
| Reporting inspector | Alastair Younger |

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

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|--|---|
| Type of school | Special |
| School category | Community special |
| Age range of pupils | 11–19 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Gender of pupils in the sixth form | Mixed |
| Number of pupils on the school roll | 146 |
| Of which, number on roll in the sixth form | 30 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair | Mr G Kay |
| Headteacher | Mrs Fran Entwistle |
| Date of previous school inspection | 6 March 2007 |
| School address | Eastern Avenue Burnley Lancashire BB10 2AT |
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 12 lessons, and held meetings with governors and staff. They talked informally with pupils. They observed the school's work, and looked at school documentation. Thirty- nine questionnaires were returned by parents and carers and were analysed by inspectors. Ninety four pupils returned a questionnaire as did 37 staff. These were also analysed.

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

- the relative progress of different groups of pupils
- the quality of teaching, with a specific focus on teachers' use of assessment to promote learning
- the quality of sixth form provision
- the extent and accuracy of the school's self-evaluation.

Information about the school

The school provides for a wide range of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Each has a statement of special educational need. Just under a half of students have moderate learning difficulties, but the range of students' needs has significantly widened and become more complex in recent years. There are now significant groups of students with severe learning difficulties, physical difficulties and autistic spectrum disorders. There are smaller groups of students with profound and multiple learning difficulties, sensory impairment, speech, language and communication difficulties and emotional and behavioural difficulties. Many students have a combination of several of these. Just under a half of students are entitled to free school meals. Most students are White British, but there is a significant population of students of Pakistani heritage many of whose parents do not speak English as their main language.

The profile of students in the sixth form differs from the rest of the school. On reaching statutory school leaving age, all students who are able to access specialist provision in the local college, have independent movement and are socially able to cope are transferred out of the school. This means that only those with the most complex or severe needs are retained.

The school moved into newly built premises just five weeks prior to the inspection.

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

Students and staff are settling into their new environment well because good leadership, management and governance have ensured a smooth transfer. Leaders and managers have a good track record of promoting continuing improvement. They have been instrumental in specifying the design of the new school to ensure that the premises include many specialist rooms and facilities to help improve outcomes for students. Accurate self-assessment, the regular monitoring of provision and the pride and commitment engendered amongst all staff mean that the school has a good capacity to keep improving.

Parents are overwhelmingly supportive of the school. They are positive about its effectiveness and the impact it is having on their children's lives. They praise the way in which the staff keep in touch with them and inform them of their children's progress. This is an outstanding feature of the school. Several staff are bi-lingual and contribute enormously to ensuring that parents who do not speak English are kept fully informed, often through home visits but also through translation in formal and informal reviews. Very sensitive support is also given to parents who experience difficulty in interpreting written communication. Students are proud of their school. Virtually all say they enjoy school and all say they feel safe. A recurring observation in lessons was just how much students were enjoying them. Parents and students alike appreciate the exceptional care, support and guidance they receive in school. This contributes enormously to students' good progress and well-being and to parents' confidence that their children are safe and happy.

The school recognises that it sits at the heart of a very diverse community. It works hard to mend social and cultural divides but has no written plans to formalise its approach and, therefore, has few means to evaluate the effectiveness of its commitment.

Although satisfactory, aspects of leadership, teaching and the curriculum in the sixth form lag behind the quality evident in the rest of the school, except in terms of care, guidance, support and safeguarding.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Develop sixth form provision over the course of the current academic year by:
 - creating a clear management structure and developing specific staff expertise
 - improving teaching by ensuring that the planning of lessons makes better use of information about the very complex nature of students' needs

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- planning the curriculum more carefully to include more appropriate opportunities for pupils' achievements to be recognised through accreditation.
- Produce a formal plan, to be completed over the course of the current academic year, which itemises the actions the school intends to take to further promote community cohesion and identifies targets and success criteria to aid the evaluation of its effectiveness.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**2**

Students enter the school with a very wide range of ability. Most transfer from another special school but some transfer from mainstream primary and secondary phase schools. In all instances, attainment is well-below average and it is often very low. A few students arrive at the very earliest stages of learning. The nature of their special educational needs and/or disabilities means that this often remains the case until they leave. The good progress of these students is seen in their growing ability to communicate their needs and wishes and thus take more control of their lives. Other students enter the school at a higher level, but rarely higher than that expected of students leaving Key Stage 1 in a mainstream school. Good teaching and a lot of determination from these students ensures that they make good progress, with the result that many achieve success in nationally accredited Entry Level courses before they leave Year 11. The increasing number of passes, the improving grades and the widening range of subjects being accredited, all testify to the good progress made by students. This good progress was widely evident during the inspection. In every lesson observed, learning and progress were graded good and in the main a clear sense of enjoyment and fulfilment was evident.

Attendance is broadly average. Many students have significant medical issues which limit their regular attendance. Unauthorised absence is rare but more common in the sixth form than in the rest of the school. Students behave well; lessons are rarely interrupted and when they are skilful management by staff minimises the impact to ensure that the learning of others is not compromised. Minor incidents are on record, often reflecting the irrational or impulsive actions of students who do not understand the impact of their actions, but there have been no exclusions in the recent past. The school strongly promotes healthy lifestyles and most students wholeheartedly take regular exercise and eat and drink sensibly. There are a few students though for whom the concept of living a healthy lifestyle starts and ends at the school gate. Students contribute well to the school community. They played an important role in making suggestions which helped in the design of the new school. They are regularly consulted about what they can contribute to making the school even better, for instance, by making sensible suggestions about school rules. Students are encouraged to think deeply about their futures and develop realistic expectations about the roles they can take in society after they leave. Their good progress in class ensures that they develop the essential basic skills to further their prospects.

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 | 2 |
| The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles | 2 |
| 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 | 2 |
| Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹ | 3 |
| The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development | 2 |

How effective is the provision?

The main strength of teaching is the way in which teachers relate to students. Staff show a deep and caring understanding for students. The students respect this and reciprocate by trying hard and behaving well. Most lessons are characterised by good support for individuals which helps all of them to be involved in activities whatever their needs. Skilled support staff play an important role in ensuring that students' physical and personal needs are addressed as well as their learning difficulties. Excellent teamwork ensures that the conduct of students experiencing moments of personal crisis does not interfere with other students' progress. Parents are unanimous in their view that teaching is good and many feel that it is better. Students agree. The quality of planning varies. Much of it is good, but some does not pay sufficient attention to the good information that the school has about what students already know, understand and can do. This occasionally results in insufficient variation of tasks, where higher attainers are relatively unchallenged whilst lower attaining ones are faced with unrealistic expectations.

The curriculum is carefully planned to ensure that the needs of all students are well met. Good initiatives, such as 'Why Try' ensure that, where necessary, intensive one-to-one support is given to those students who most need it. Curricular enrichment is particularly good. It contributes enormously to students' enjoyment of school and their personal

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.

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development and well-being. There is an extensive programme of visits and visitors, often relating to the enhancement of students' creative and cultural development. There is a very appropriate, strong promotion of creative subjects and physical exercise, both of which are areas in which many students can compete equally with their mainstream peers. The promotion of personal, social and health education is very well interwoven into all areas of the curriculum, as befits a school of this nature. Students, especially in Key Stage 4, benefit greatly from links with mainstream schools.

This is a very caring school. Students agree with their parents' unanimously positive views about this. Parents are fully involved in negotiations to ensure that their children's needs are being fully met. Excellent arrangements are in place to ensure that language or circumstance do not present barriers to communication. Close liaison with schools from which students transfer on entry, and colleges they transfer to on leaving, ensures easy transition from one to the other. A good feature of the support and guidance of students is the way in which a familiar teaching assistant moves up through the school with each group of students. This is reassuring to them and ensures that they all know someone they can turn to in moments of difficulty.

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?

Good leadership, management and governance have all played an essential part in ensuring that the school has made a smooth transition into its new premises with as little disruption to students' learning and development as possible. At the same time, there has been no loss of focus on securing good outcomes for students. Staff morale is high. Individuals are proud to work in the school and recognise the impact they can have on students' lives. To this end, they take advantage of the good range of training opportunities offered to them. The headteacher and senior staff demonstrate a good awareness of the school's strengths and weaknesses and are ambitious to capitalise on the many new opportunities opening up before them in their new school. Central amongst these are the sharing of facilities and staff expertise with the co-located mainstream school. Great care is taken to ensure that all students are given the specialist help they need and thus share equal opportunities. This is assured by offering the 'steady and supportive encouragement' enshrined in the school's vision statement. Managers ensure that every effort is made to safeguard students by meeting statutory requirements in this area of its work. The school is involved in many initiatives and

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activities to promote community cohesion, for instance through sports' partnerships, but it does not have a cohesive plan to rationalise these activities and thus finds itself hard pressed to evaluate its effectiveness in this field.

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 | 2 |
| 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 | 3 |
| The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money | 2 |

Sixth form

When three schools amalgamated to form Ridgewood in 2005 none had a sixth form department. The current staff are still relatively inexperienced in this phase, as are leaders and managers. This is reflected in the fact that there is currently no discrete management structure in the sixth form department. Satisfactory leadership and management of the department are, however, ensured by the school's headteacher and deputy headteacher. Students joining the sixth form are those who have been deemed likely to be unable to cope with alternative provision for students beyond statutory school leaving age because of the complexity of their learning difficulties or their physical or emotional needs. In the main, the curriculum they are offered meets their needs, but opportunities for their achievements to be fully recognised through accreditation are underdeveloped. Positive outcomes are far more recognisable in students' personal development, for instance, in their growing independence, than they are in terms of academic achievement. Parents are not unhappy about this. Teaching is very variable. At its best it enthuses students and is carefully tailored to involve them in discussion and evaluation of their present and previous work. Where it is weaker, tasks are mundane and poorly matched to students' prior learning. The care of students is of the same exemplary standard as that found in the rest of the school.

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These are the grades for the sixth form

| | |
|--|----------|
| Overall effectiveness of the sixth form | 3 |
| Taking into account: | |
| Outcomes for students in the sixth form | 3 |
| The quality of provision in the sixth form | 3 |
| Leadership and management of the sixth form | 3 |

Views of parents and carers

Parents are almost unanimous in their support of the school. They feel it is well led and managed, that their children are well taught and that they make the progress expected of them. All parents express total confidence in the way the school keeps their children safe and all feel fully involved in decisions affecting their children's futures. The evidence of inspection strongly supports these views.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Ridgewood Community 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 39 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 146 pupils registered at the school.

| Statements | Strongly Agree | | Agree | | Disagree | | Strongly disagree | |
|---|----------------|----|-------|----|----------|---|-------------------|---|
| | Total | % | Total | % | Total | % | Total | % |
| My child enjoys school | 29 | 74 | 10 | 26 | 1 | 3 | 0 | 0 |
| The school keeps my child safe | 30 | 77 | 10 | 26 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| The school informs me about my child's progress | 26 | 67 | 14 | 36 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| My child is making enough progress at this school | 23 | 59 | 17 | 44 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| The teaching is good at this school | 26 | 67 | 13 | 33 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| The school helps me to support my child's learning | 28 | 72 | 12 | 31 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle | 25 | 64 | 14 | 36 | 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) | 28 | 72 | 10 | 26 | 1 | 3 | 0 | 0 |
| The school meets my child's particular needs | 29 | 74 | 10 | 26 | 1 | 3 | 0 | 0 |
| The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour | 27 | 69 | 12 | 31 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns | 27 | 69 | 13 | 33 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| The school is led and managed effectively | 28 | 72 | 12 | 31 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school | 29 | 74 | 10 | 26 | 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.



16 October 2009

Dear Students

Inspection of Ridgewood Community High School, Burnley, BB10 2AT

It was a pleasure to visit your school the other day. The reason we called was to see how well you were getting on. We were impressed. Thank you for the part you played in helping to convince us of this and please pass on our thanks to those of your parents who shared their views with us.

After two days in school and having seen most of you being taught we came to the conclusion that you are getting a good deal. This is because you are well taught and extremely well cared for by your teaching and care staff. We thought your timetables were filled with good opportunities to help you learn, develop and enjoy yourselves. We also felt that the school is well led and managed and that this had helped to reassure you that you did not change school at the beginning of this year but just moved to a new building.

An important part of our job is to suggest ways in which your school could get even better. We came up with two important ones. The first is that the sixth form is not as effective as the rest of the school and therefore needs to improve. The second is that we would like to see the school planning more precisely to show how you all contribute to making the community a better place to live in.

We wish you well, good luck for the future.

Yours sincerely, on behalf of the inspection team

Alastair Younger

Lead inspector

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