

Ridgeway School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	125805
Local Authority	Warwickshire
Inspection number	381130
Inspection dates	7–8 December 2011
Reporting inspector	Frank Price

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

Type of school	Special
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	2–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	111
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Heather Calver
Headteacher	Patricia Flynn
Date of previous school inspection	21 October 2008
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Age group	2–11
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. They observed 11 lessons or parts of lessons and 10 teachers. Meetings were held with the Chair of the Governing Body, staff and pupils. Policies, documents and assessment data were scrutinised. Inspectors analysed 26 questionnaires returned by parents and carers.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at a number of key areas.

- How accurately does the school measure pupils' progress, particularly for those who make very small steps of progress?
- How well does the school promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development?
- How effectively does the governing body hold the school to account?

Information about the school

Ridgeway School caters for pupils with a range of complex learning difficulties and an increasing number have autistic spectrum disorders. Just over three-quarters of the pupils are boys. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is broadly average. The majority of pupils are from White British backgrounds. A few pupils are looked after by the local authority. The school relocated to new purpose-built accommodation in November 2010.

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

1

Main findings

Ridgeway School is outstanding. The care, guidance and support pupils receive are first rate. Staff know their pupils exceptionally well and are skilled at overcoming any hindrances that may interfere with their ability to learn. The outstanding curriculum meets the wide range of pupils' needs exceptionally well. The use of information and communication technology to enliven learning, such as in the sensory room, is outstanding and often innovative. Pupils' behaviour is excellent. This is due to a combination of excellent teaching, which captivates their interest, and very effective systems to manage and reduce any behavioural problems. The school works closely with parents and carers. They hold the school in high regard and are pleased with the progress their children make. One parent commented, 'Without the brilliant support from the staff, our child would not have made significant progress or gained in confidence'.

The governing body has been highly influential in determining the direction of the school and has played an important role in strategic decisions. The accommodation and resources are superb. They are used very effectively so that pupils have the best possible environment in which to thrive. The school provides pupils with a rich, warm and stimulating environment. Pupils benefit from specialist areas such as the on-site pool, soft play area and excellent outside play facilities.

Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage make an excellent start in their school life. All make at least good progress and some children make outstanding progress in each of the areas of learning. Some children are able to attend mainstream school because of the impressive gains they make. Assessment procedures to track their progress are effective, although an assessment system that aligns with the rest of the school has not yet been developed.

Pupils make outstanding progress because of outstanding teaching. The gains they make in their learning throughout the school are impressive. However, the measuring of more-able pupils' progress lacks precision. On occasion, this leads to some inaccuracies in judging their rate of progress, particularly when comparing them with similar groups nationally. Nevertheless, assessment information paints a compelling picture of outstanding progress overall. The tracking of pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties, who make very small steps of progress, is secure.

Pupils enjoy school a great deal. They reported that they feel extremely safe and

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listed many activities that they like to participate in. Lunchtime activities are popular, such as using the sensory room, or electronic keep fit games and these provide great enjoyment and stimulation. Pupils' personal development is promoted exceptionally well and where their needs allow, they develop into self-confident young people. Some pupils have increasingly complex learning and communication difficulties and the school recognises the importance of meeting these needs through more consistent use of alternative communication strategies, such as signs and symbols. This includes providing opportunities for parents and carers to be trained in the use of these techniques.

The school's capacity for improvement is outstanding. It has a track record of sustained improvement and the key issues raised at the previous inspection have all been addressed exceptionally well. The school has made outstanding improvements, with all areas of the school's work having improved significantly. The leadership and management of the school are outstanding. There is a strong shared sense of purpose and teamwork, and staff morale is high. Leaders have an excellent understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development and school improvement planning is thorough and well-judged.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Refine assessment procedures to:
 - measure children's progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage in a way that aligns with the rest of the school and provides consistency
 - ensure the assessment of more-able pupils' progress is tracked accurately to correctly identify the amount of progress they make over the course of a key stage.
- Improve the consistent use of alternative communication methods, such as signs and symbols, across the school and provide more training for parents and carers where appropriate.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**1**

Pupils enjoy lessons and work hard to achieve outstandingly well. They make exceptional gains in English and mathematics, as well as in a range of other subjects such as physical education, art and design and music. Pupils clearly enjoy school and talk excitedly of the lessons and activities they like best. In one lesson, pupils learned how to make programmable robots move forward, to left and right and recorded their results using a video camera. In a mathematics lesson, they made excellent progress in using information from a video clip to work out journey times. The school has carefully analysed the outcomes for different groups and this indicates that all pupils, regardless of their learning needs, or different ethnic backgrounds, achieve equally well. Pupils with more complex and profound learning difficulties make smaller but important steps of progress. Pupils who have autistic spectrum disorders, make excellent progress in learning how to relate to other people and coping with

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change more easily. Pupils improve their communication skills through the use of alternative forms of communication such as signs and symbols, although these are not always consistently applied across the school.

Pupils develop their knowledge of how to keep safe and lead healthier lifestyles exceptionally well. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. Pupils have regular opportunities for reflection. An assembly to commemorate Remembrance Day produced a long respectful silence. Pupils make an outstanding contribution to their school through the school council, which has made suggestions for improvement, and they have been involved in the interview of staff. Pupils are given numerous daily tasks of responsibility. Their wider contribution is equally strong with involvement in community events and local, national and international charitable events.

These are the grades for pupils’ outcomes

Pupils’ achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	1
Taking into account:	
Pupils’ attainment ¹	*
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	1
The extent of pupils’ spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1

How effective is the provision?

Teaching is vibrant and imaginative. The use of information and communication technology to make learning stimulating is excellent. For example, digital visualisers are used to display small items, or pupils’ work, so that they can be seen by the whole class on large plasma screens. The range and use of software gives teachers an excellent bank of resources to enliven learning. Staff have positive and supportive relationships with pupils and, as a result, pupils thrive and enjoy learning. Staff are

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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skilled at managing pupils’ behaviour sensitively. Teaching assistants are well deployed to support pupils’ learning. Pupils’ progress is tracked across all subjects and the resulting information is used to inform teachers’ planning and to ensure that learning is personalised.

The curriculum is monitored and evaluated regularly to ensure that all pupils’ needs are met. The curriculum is innovative and provides a wide range of experiences. For example, counselling has been introduced for some pupils to help them cope better in some situations they find stressful. Pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties benefit from a superb multi-sensory environment. Links with the local community provide good learning opportunities for pupils to develop their independence skills. Outstanding care ensures pupils are safe and confident and they are receptive to learning. Pupils whose circumstances make them vulnerable make outstanding progress as a result of the school’s effective work with families. Excellent targeted support ensures that pupils get the help they need. Procedures for pupils’ transition to their next phase of education are carefully thought out.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	1
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
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 headteacher sets an excellent tone for the school. Senior leaders have secured sustained improvement through setting high expectations and working collaboratively with staff, the governing body and families. Challenging, but sensible targets have been set for pupils to ensure their progress is excellent. The school’s self-evaluation is largely accurate, although it is too cautious in its judgements of teaching and learning. However, teaching and learning have been monitored regularly and feedback on observed lessons has helped teachers to improve and develop their skills very effectively.

The active governing body is fully committed to securing improvements in the school. Its members are knowledgeable, committed and undertake formal and informal visits to the school. They have worked closely with the headteacher to provide a clear direction, which has resulted in outstanding facilities and contributed to the school’s outstanding effectiveness.

Leaders use assessment data effectively to check that all pupils, whatever their background or disability, achieve equally well. Information is analysed and used to detect any weaknesses and implement strategies to address issues quickly and

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effectively. For example, this has led the school to have a strong focus on improving reading across the school. Comparative assessment information is being used increasingly to provide more challenge and to increase the rigour of target setting and assessment.

An emphasis on promoting tolerance and respect underpins much of the school’s work. The school is a harmonious community, where everyone is respected and valued and equal opportunities are promoted exceptionally well. Pupils have excellent opportunities to be involved in the local community such as visiting a care home, mixing with other pupils in a range of schools and accessing facilities in the local community to support their learning. However, the school does not formally evaluate the impact of its promotion of community cohesion. Leaders regard safeguarding as of paramount importance. There are some minor administrative omissions but these do not have a tangible impact on the very safe practices of the school. The school builds excellent collaborative links with other agencies and these, together with good levels of supervision, ensure that pupils are kept safe.

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	1
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	2
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

Children enter the Nursery or Reception class with a wide range of complex needs. They make outstanding progress over a short period of time. Children enjoy the wide variety of activities on offer, and are encouraged to fully explore tasks to increase their levels of concentration. One child took great pleasure in taking photographs of staff and other children with a digital camera, designed for young children. Less able children learn how to focus on sensory activities in a quiet room where they track lights and listen to a story. The Early Years Foundation Stage is vibrant, attractive and stimulating. The facilities and resources are outstanding. Children make the most

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of the excellent outdoor play facilities and these are used well to support their physical development and outdoor learning. Children make excellent progress in their communication, personal and social development.

The leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage are outstanding. The needs of each child are recognised and addressed through exceptionally well-targeted interventions. Children benefit from the close collaboration with parents and carers, schools and other agencies. Good staffing levels ensure children’s safety and well-being is secure. The arrangements for children’s induction and transition to other schools or the main school are smooth. Staff work very effectively as a team and activities are exceptionally well planned to extend and develop each small learning step. Planning focuses on individual learning intentions, and ‘learning journals’ provide an informative record of children’s experiences and learning, which parents and carers appreciate. Assessment is used outstandingly well to measure children’s progress and plan relevant learning experiences. Measures to assess children’s progress, to match with the rest of the school, are not yet fully developed. Leaders recognise that this will help to provide better continuity of progress, as children move through the school.

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

Views of parents and carers

Parents and carers are supportive and delighted with the care and education their children receive. There were numerous positive comments, indicating both appreciation and high regard for the work of the school. One parent commented, ‘I don’t know what I would do without this school’. They like the ethos of school, find that it has supportive staff and that their children make enough progress. Inspectors found that the school works very closely with parents and carers and rightly views this partnership as an important aspect of its work. A very few parents and carers feel that the school could help them to be better trained in the use of alternative methods of communication, particularly when their child is non-verbal.

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 26 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 111 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	22	85	4	15	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	23	88	2	8	0	0	1	4
The school informs me about my child’s progress	16	62	6	23	1	4	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	16	62	9	35	0	0	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	21	81	4	15	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child’s learning	15	58	7	27	2	8	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	17	65	8	31	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)	15	58	4	15	1	4	0	0
The school meets my child’s particular needs	19	73	7	27	0	0	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	19	73	3	12	1	4	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	18	69	6	23	0	0	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	16	62	9	35	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child’s experience at this school	21	81	5	19	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 all 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

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	43	47	10	0
Primary schools	6	46	42	6
Secondary schools	14	36	41	9
Sixth forms	15	42	41	3
Special schools	30	48	19	3
Pupil referral units	14	50	31	5
All schools	10	44	39	6

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 are for the period 1 September 2010 to 08 April 2011 and are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 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.

Sixth form figures reflect the judgements made for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

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 pupils' 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.



9 December 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Ridgeway School, Warwick, CV34 5DF

I enjoyed my visit to your school, talking with many of you and meeting the school council. Your new school building is excellent and helps you to have lots of interesting activities such as the soft play area and the outside active zone. I liked the fact that you have lots of opportunities to be involved in your community such as visiting the local community cafe, care home and raising money for many worthy causes.

You go to an outstanding school and it is a happy and exciting place to be. You are looked after outstandingly well and this helps you to do your best. You told me you feel safe and comfortable at school and that you get on well with all the adults who work with you. Teaching is outstanding. It is lively and imaginative. Lessons are made very interesting by the use of information and communication technology. Many of you are confident in using this technology in your learning. This helps you to make outstanding progress.

The headteacher, staff and governing body do an outstanding job in leading your school. Everyone helps each other and this makes your school an excellent place to be. I have asked the people who are responsible for running your school to do some things so that it can become even better. I have asked them to:

- measure the progress of the youngest children so that it fits in with the rest of the school and to make sure the progress of more-able pupils is checked carefully
- use ways of helping some of you to communicate more consistently across all parts of the school and to help your parents and carers to become confident in these methods as well.

You can help to make sure your school remains outstanding by continuing to work hard and enjoying school. I wish you well for the future.

Yours sincerely

Frank Price
Lead inspector

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