

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
www.ofsted.gov.uk



11 April 2016

Mr Steven Colledge
Executive Headteacher
The Ridgeway School and Sixth Form College
Inverary Road
Wroughton
Swindon
SN4 9DJ

Dear Mr Colledge

Short inspection of The Ridgeway School and Sixth Form College

Following my visit with Roger Garrett, Ofsted Inspector, to the school on 1 March 2016, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report the inspection findings. The visit was the first short inspection carried out since your school was judged to be good in September 2012.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the previous inspection.

Pupils and learners in the school mostly achieve well, and many achieve very well. Pupils conduct themselves well in lessons and have a very positive approach to their learning and to the school more widely. Teachers generally give pupils detailed feedback on their work so that they know how to improve it. The large majority of pupils act on this feedback when they are clear about what they need to do. As a result, they mostly make at least good, and often better, progress.

Under your leadership and that of the headteacher, the culture and ethos of the school have been developed to put pupils and sixth-form learners at its centre. There is an excellent focus on the all-round development of each individual. While academic success is at the heart of this, very good attention is given to developing pupils' and learners' wider skills, knowledge, awareness, attitudes and understanding. To this end, you ensure that all have access to a very wide breadth and depth of experiences and activities. These activities are very well attended.

The arrangements for monitoring and evaluating pupils' achievement and the quality of teaching have been developed and refined so that they are now extremely robust. This enables you to identify accurately where improvements in teaching are necessary, as well as to evaluate the effectiveness of any actions you take and of any additional support provided for pupils. A very good programme for the

professional development of teachers and support staff is targeted well on those aspects of their work that require improvement. There is a good balance of training that benefits all teachers, enhances work in subject departments and provides well-focused support for individuals. Subject-level self-evaluation and improvement planning are well established, effective in driving improvement and carefully tailored to need.

You accurately identified two key areas for improvement:

- outcomes for pupils in mathematics, particularly for girls, disadvantaged pupils and some prior attainment groups
- poor attendance of some pupils.

You have tackled the weaknesses in mathematics thoroughly, including taking a more hands-on role in supporting the subject leader and commissioning an external review leading to a detailed action plan. The mathematics curriculum for pupils in Years 7 to 9 has been changed to ensure that pupils make more progress in these years. As a result, current pupils, including girls and disadvantaged pupils, are making better progress in mathematics. However, additional support to cover gaps in learning for pupils in Year 11 in 2015 was insufficient to prevent some underachievement, leading to disappointing GCSE results in mathematics in 2015.

You and other school leaders are fully aware that the attendance of some pupils and sixth-form learners is not yet good enough. Pupils' attendance overall and for girls has improved from the 2015 figures. A small number of disadvantaged pupils and some of those with special educational needs still do not attend well. You recognise that rapidly improving the attendance for these groups is a key priority for the school.

The Chair of the Local Board of Governors and other members mostly have a clear overall understanding of what the school does well and where further improvement is required. This enables them to provide you and other school leaders with a good balance of support and challenge. Governors are fully aware that the underachievement of pupils in mathematics and the poor attendance of some pupils are key priorities. They are monitoring developments in both of these priority areas effectively. However, in other areas they are less well informed and their challenge is less robust; for example, for the sixth form.

Learners entering the sixth form mostly have high starting points. As a result, many achieve very good grades in A-level and other examinations. Learners' overall progress and achievement in all subjects are in line with national averages and, in a few cases, better than this. However, some learners make too little progress in a small number of subjects. In these subjects, the range of grades achieved by learners with similar starting points is too wide.

Sixth-form learners are provided with a very good breadth of opportunities to enhance their all-round development. However, the development of their wider employability skills is uncoordinated and not monitored effectively enough.

Safeguarding is effective.

You and other leaders have ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and up to date, and that records are detailed and complete. All staff are fully aware of all aspects of safeguarding and child protection as a result of effective training. They are secure in their understanding of the Prevent duty and how to deal with extremism and prevent radicalisation. Governors monitor all aspects of safeguarding carefully.

There is an excellent focus on the all-round personal development, welfare, safety and well-being of all pupils, including their physical, emotional and mental health. The school's leadership team has created an ethos and culture that is centred on knowing every pupil well, and that leads to a harmonious community where pupils feel safe, behave safely and are looked after well. Pupils and sixth-form learners know what to do and whom to go to if they have any concerns. They have confidence that these concerns will be dealt with sensitively and effectively. Pupils and learners in the sixth form are provided with high-quality guidance and advice on a wide range of issues. Good links with a wide range of external agencies are used well when necessary.

Personal, social, health and citizenship education is delivered through the curriculum and a wide range of other activities. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and the way they are prepared for life in modern Britain are strong features of the school. Pupils have a very secure understanding of fundamental British values. Pupils are very supportive of each other inside and outside classrooms. Pupils doing exceptionally well and those who are finding the work difficult are equally well supported by their peers. Relationships between pupils and teachers are very trusting and supportive.

Inspection findings

At the start of the inspection, we agreed to look at specific aspects of the school to enable us to determine whether the quality of education provided by the school was still good. The areas we identified together allowed us to look at subjects where performance is strong, such as English, and those where you recognise that further improvement is required, such as mathematics. We also agreed to evaluate the achievement of particular groups of pupils, such as those who are disadvantaged, the effectiveness of the sixth form, and to determine the impact of the actions you have taken to improve some pupils' behaviour and attendance.

- You and other school leaders make accurate evaluations of the quality of teaching and its impact on pupils' learning and progress.
- The quality of pupils' work and the progress they make are at least good in many subjects and outstanding in some. You are fully aware that, at times, teaching needs to provide higher levels of challenge to ensure that pupils' achievement improves further.

- Teachers provide pupils with good feedback on their work that helps them to improve it and make further progress. However, not all teachers check that these improvements follow through and result in better quality work.
- Pupils clearly enjoy being in school and in their lessons and their parents agree with this view. Pupils behave very well and involve themselves fully in the activities the teacher has planned. They are confident that teachers will do whatever they can to help them achieve as well as they can.
- Many teachers use questioning to engage pupils and sixth-form learners to check their learning and develop deeper understanding. However, the questions are too often not carefully directed to maximise the progress of individual pupils or learners, some of whom can then 'opt out' from responding.
- The quality of pupils' work in mathematics shows clearly that the achievement of pupils in Years 7 to 9, including those who are disadvantaged, has improved. Most pupils currently in Years 10 and 11 are on track to achieve in line with national expectations. However, teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve are not sufficiently challenging to lead to the highest rates of progress.
- Outcomes for pupils in science in the past have been mostly high. Year 7 pupils thoroughly enjoy working in a science laboratory, using the equipment and learning new scientific words. However, they were clear that there is some repetition of work covered in primary school.
- Currently, the curriculum, particularly in Year 7, does not build well enough on pupils' prior achievement and the higher expectations of the new primary national curriculum.
- The work of pupils currently in the school shows that the gap between the achievement of disadvantaged pupils and that of others has narrowed significantly. The 2015 examination results showed that disadvantaged pupils achieved less well than others in some subjects, particularly in mathematics.
- In 2015, pupils' overall attendance was just above the national average, but low for girls and very low for disadvantaged pupils and some of those with special educational needs. Pupils' attendance overall and for girls has improved, but is still too low for a small group of disadvantaged pupils and some of those with special educational needs.
- Behaviour in lessons and around the school is at least good and often exemplary. The number of pupils excluded from the school for fixed periods has been high in the past as a result of the 'zero tolerance' approach to poor behaviour. The trend over time, and current information, show the effectiveness of the approach through the significant reduction in the number of exclusions and in the number of pupils involved.

- In the sixth form, the 2015 examination results showed that the achievement, the 'value added', of learners overall in all subjects was in line with the national average, with a small number of subjects above average. However, school and sixth-form leaders were not fully aware that, in some subjects, learners with similar starting points achieved too wide a spread of grades. In these subjects, teachers do not take sufficient account of learners' starting points and current progress in their planning and teaching.
- Sixth-form learners' progress is now monitored more carefully. The sixth-form leader identifies any learners who are falling behind and good use is made of supervised independent study to help them catch up. However, the poor attendance of some learners contributes to their underachievement and to the variation in achievement for some of those learners with similar starting points.

Next steps for the school

- Leaders and governors should build on the good and outstanding practice that there is in the school to ensure that teachers:
 - have the highest expectations of what pupils can achieve
 - establish precisely what sixth-form learners can do, know and understand, and what they cannot do so well, and use this to plan and teach so that more learners make better progress from their starting points.
- Leaders and governors should ensure that the curriculum and teaching in Years 7 to 9 builds well on what pupils achieve in primary school.
- Leaders and governors must take steps to rapidly improve the attendance of some disadvantaged pupils, some of those with special educational needs and learners in the sixth form.

I am copying this letter to the Chief Executive of the White Horse Federation, the Chair of the Local Governing Board, the Regional Schools Commissioner, the Director of Children's Services for Swindon County Council and the Education Funding Agency. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

James Sage

Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

At the start of the inspection, inspectors met with you and other senior leaders to review your self-evaluation and other information to determine the lines of enquiry for the inspection. We then held further meetings with you, your senior leaders, other key members of staff, the Chair of the Local Governing Board, the Chief Executive of the White Horse Federation and with pupils. We observed learning, with you and other senior leaders, in a range of subjects and year groups, including in the sixth form. In these lessons, we looked at the work of pupils and sixth-form learners, and talked with them about it. A range of documentary evidence was looked at, including information about pupils' and sixth-form learners' current achievement and attendance. We also discussed your latest evaluations of the quality of teaching and learning in the school. We undertook activities to ensure that safeguarding arrangements were effective. We took account of pupils' and teachers' responses to the online surveys and to parents' views through Parent View.