



The Ridgeway School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 125805
LEA Warwickshire
Inspection number 282001
Inspection dates 14 October 2005 to 14 October 2005
Reporting inspector Alan Dobbins RISP

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

Type of school	Special	School address	Montague Road
School category	Community special		Warwick
Age range of pupils	2 to 19		Warwickshire CV34 5LW
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01926 491 987
Number on roll	125	Fax number	01926 836 959
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mrs Heather Calver
Date of previous inspection	7 June 2000	Headteacher	Mrs Pat Flynn

Age group 2 to 19	Inspection dates 14 October 2005 - 14 October 2005	Inspection number 282001
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This school for pupils with severe, profound and complex learning difficulties is larger than most equivalent schools. It provides specialist provision for the central area of Warwickshire, including all of Warwick. All pupils have statements of special educational need, with an increasing number having autistic spectrum disorders. Boys outnumber girls by almost three to one and a small number of pupils are from ethnic minorities. Since the last inspection, the school's roll has increased from 97 to 124. In 2001, the school gained Beacon status. The two previous Ofsted inspections judged the accommodation to be deficient because it imposed limits on what could be taught and how teaching could occur. The school is part of the revision of special education provision in Warwickshire. Plans are well advanced for the school to cater for primary aged pupils only from 2006.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Ridgeway is a good school, providing good value for money. Despite the continuing limitations imposed by the accommodation, all pupils make good progress, and some make outstanding progress, in their learning and in becoming increasingly mature and responsible. Most leave school well prepared for the next stage of their life. The headteacher is committed to leading a school that provides outstanding educational opportunities for all pupils. She inspires staff to work to the best of their capabilities and is very ably supported by the deputy headteacher and the other senior managers. As a result, the school is calm and very well organised and pupils are cared for exceptionally well. The teaching is good and is often outstanding in lessons that do not require specialist facilities. The good curriculum matches well with pupils' learning and additional needs and provides sufficient opportunities for them to demonstrate their learning on nationally accredited awards. School leaders operate good procedures for recognising the effectiveness of the school. Governors rightly recognise the good progress made since the last inspection in meeting the needs of a greater number of pupils, with an increased range of special educational needs, in accommodation that is not fully fit for its purpose. The capacity for continued improvement is good.

Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form

Grade: 2

What the school should do to improve further

- continue to develop the procedures for recognising the progress pupils make so that the progress of different groups of pupils can be compared
- develop the curriculum overview documents for all subjects in line with those already developed for mathematics.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

The pupils make good progress. Most leave school as confident young people who are prepared well for their life after school. Many children start school in reception with few speech and language skills and many require considerable adult help when eating, toileting and dressing. They gain a good start to their education because they are taught well and prepared well for the next stage, whether that is in Year 1 at this school or at the mainstream school to which some transfer.

Pupils in Years 1 to 11 make good progress in subjects and, because of the excellent planning documents that provide detailed support for teaching, outstanding progress in mathematics. The school's data analysis currently excludes pupils with the most severe level of learning difficulties and those for which data is available for only one year. Over the last two years, 60% of the other pupils have gained one P level or better. Some make outstanding gains of more than two P levels. When their progress is judged

against targets derived from comparative school data, a good proportion do exceptionally well. As a consequence, by the time they enter the post-16 provision, most communicate well in different settings and function independently as young people. This represents good progress and parents agree with this.

Post-16 students make good progress over a curriculum that prepares them well for life after school by making good use of college courses and by providing a good range of nationally accredited awards on which they demonstrate the full extent of their learning over their time at school.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Personal development is a core focus of the school's work and is outstanding. Parents express considerable appreciation of the school for the transformation of their children into confident, outgoing and extremely well behaved individuals. The regular celebration of success makes pupils feel very positive about themselves and their achievements. They know how to keep themselves safe and healthy. They enjoy their lessons and demonstrate a mature attitude to taking responsibility for themselves and each other. The school council, to which representatives are elected to represent their peers, contributes to the very strong sense of community that permeates all the work of the school. Attendance is good.

Pupils understand the difference between right and wrong, and good and bad. Their respect for each other's beliefs is reinforced through thoughtful presentations in the regular assemblies. Frequent opportunities to work with visiting artists and musicians very effectively help them to appreciate their own and other cultures. Older pupils learn valuable lessons about economic well-being by taking part in two very successful mini enterprises.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are good overall and outstanding in some lessons, especially in those that do not require the use of specialist subject rooms. In each class, the range of pupils' learning needs and capabilities is very wide and has increased over the last few years as the school's roll has grown. Staff are meeting this challenge well so that all pupils, irrespective of the severity of their learning difficulties or their ability to communicate, make equivalent progress against their targets for learning. This is because lessons are planned very well. Tasks are carefully selected to match with the learning needs of each pupil, so that for all pupils, new skills are built on prior learning. Teachers are good at using many different teaching approaches, for example, pupils with autism are taught predominantly through TEACCH* procedures. Teaching assistants are very competent, routinely deployed very well and they and the teachers

are expert at using total communication strategies, including signs, symbols and pictures.

The outstanding relationships between staff and pupils help pupils to be confident learners who are unafraid of making a mistake and who eagerly try out new equipment and new ways of learning. Consequently, in many lessons, learning is fun and rewarding, and pupils and staff gain great enjoyment from celebrating success. This was the case in a literacy lesson for younger pupils in which they spontaneously called out answers to the teacher's questions because they were excited about their learning and were having fun.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

All pupils have the opportunity to undertake a wide range of work that is well planned to ensure that they participate in every activity on offer and also experience success. Good use is made of the many good quality specialist resources, such as the multi-sensory, soft play and hydrotherapy rooms and the good information and communication technology suite. Younger pupils in the Foundation and primary departments enjoy very good arrangements for their learning, but secondary aged, and post-16 pupils have a less successful experience. The pressure on space, resulting from the increasing number of pupils placed in inadequate buildings, has meant that specialist rooms, for example, for science, art and design, and design and technology, are being constantly re-organised or lost for other purposes. In these difficult circumstances, staff do their very best to minimise the effect on learning. The good progress the pupils make is testament to their success. Provision for physical education is similarly inadequate because of the cramped conditions. The good use of local sites to provide many outdoor and adventure activities helps, in part, to overcome the deficiencies in the accommodation.

Older pupils take part in a comprehensive range of good quality activities leading to nationally accredited awards that fully reflect the extent of their learning while at school. This is especially so for their basic skills and personal development. Practical, well chosen work experience placements and learning about the world of work provide pupils with a good understanding of their challenges beyond school. Post-16 students gain from following a good range of vocational courses at local colleges of further education.

The school actively and successfully seeks and provides opportunities for pupils of all ages to join mainstream classes and work alongside their more able peers, both as individuals and in groups. Very clear social and academic benefits accrue for everyone involved.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

The school is rightly proud of the exceptional arrangements it makes to support the care and welfare of its pupils, and parents' praise of this aspect of the school's work

is fully justified. Parents also appreciate the very well focused support and guidance they gain themselves, which frequently benefits their whole family.

All staff, including those with specialist training who visit the school, have an avowed commitment to knowing and supporting each individual pupil to the best of their ability. As a result, all pupils feel secure and valued and, as they spend time at school, become increasingly self-confident and self-assured. Arrangements to promote good behaviour are very effective and the well established routines create a calm and orderly environment in which pupils thrive. The school is fully aware of its responsibilities to protect pupils at risk and has exemplary procedures for health and safety, and child protection. Staff know the importance of encouraging pupils to be as independent as possible and provide many opportunities for this.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher is an excellent role model. She is fully supported by a very competent deputy headteacher. Day to day, they provide conditions in which staff and pupils are able to consistently do their best because systems and procedures are clear and understood by all and expectations are very high. Since the time of the last inspection, they have worked hard and successfully, in developing the school to meet the needs of an increasing number of pupils, despite accommodation consistently recognised as substandard. The capacity for continued improvement remains good.

The school's ethos includes recognising the importance of self-evaluation as an integral element for sustained improvement. This is reflected in many ways, but especially in the rigorous procedures for evaluating the quality of teaching and learning, and also in the way that all staff fully accept the need for regularly updating their skills and knowledge through in-service training. The headteacher recognises the importance of judging the progress pupils make against those in equivalent schools. Much thinking has gone into how this might be best achieved and the procedures being followed are good. But, as yet, it is not possible to compare the progress of different groups of pupils, such as those with different causes or levels of severity for their learning difficulties.

Governance is good. The chairperson offers wide experience and wisdom to the headteacher and to fellow governors, many of whom are new appointments. The local education authority (LEA) recognises the requirement of developing the building to meet its new purpose. These plans are well advanced and governors will continue to closely oversee the development.

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Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	School Overall	16-19
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	2	2
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2	2
The quality and standards in foundation stage	2	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	Yes	Yes
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	Yes

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	4	4
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2	2

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1	
The behaviour of learners	1	
The attendance of learners	2	
How well learners enjoy their education	1	
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1	
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1	
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1	
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1	

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1	1

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2	
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	2	
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1	
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	1	
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2	
The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected	Yes	insufficient evidence

The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy	
Learners are encouraged and enabled to eat and drink healthily	Yes
Learners are encouraged and enabled to take regular exercise	Yes
Learners are discouraged from smoking and substance abuse	Yes
Learners are educated about sexual health	Yes
The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe	
Procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements	Yes
Risk assessment procedures and related staff training are in place	Yes
Action is taken to reduce anti-social behaviour, such as bullying and racism	Yes
Learners are taught about key risks and how to deal with them	Yes
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution	
Learners are helped to develop stable, positive relationships	Yes
Learners, individually and collectively, participate in making decisions that affect them	Yes
Learners are encouraged to initiate, participate in and manage activities in school and the wider community	Yes
The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being	
There is provision to promote learners' basic skills	Yes
Learners have opportunities to develop enterprise skills and work in teams	Yes
Careers education and guidance is provided to all learners in key stage 3 and 4 and the sixth form	Yes
Education for all learners aged 14–19 provides an understanding of employment and the economy	Yes

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Ridgeway School Montague Road Warwick CV34 5LW

24 October 2005

Dear Pupils

We very much enjoyed our time with you and would like to thank you for talking with us and for helping us find out about your school. Now, we want to let you know what we think about your school.

We think that you gain great benefit by attending the school for a number of reasons:

- You are looked after exceptionally well. This makes you like the school and the staff very much and makes you want to work very hard to do your best.
- You enjoy school very much and this shows in the exceptionally good way you behave in lessons and at other times such as lunchtimes, the polite way in which you greet visitors and the respect you show for each other.
- Your headteacher and your deputy headteacher are very good at making sure that all staff, and yourselves, are able to do their best at all times. We like this very much because it means that you make good progress in your learning and in becoming responsible young people.
- Your teachers and teaching assistants work very hard to provide work that is best for each one of you. Because of this, we know that you enjoy lessons and have fun when you are learning.
- What you learn in your lessons is right for you and helps prepare you well for your life after you leave school.

The buildings are not very good and we agree with the headteacher and the local authority that they should be better. We would also like the school to know a little better than it does at the moment about how well all of you are doing in your work.

With best wishes

Dr D Alan Dobbins Lead Inspector