

INSPECTION REPORT

RIDGEWAY SPECIAL SCHOOL

Warwick

LEA area: Warwickshire

Unique reference number: 125805

Headteacher: Mrs P Flynn

Reporting inspector: Brian Burnett
2764

Dates of inspection: 7th – 9th June 2000

Inspection number: 67162

Inspection carried out under section 10 of the School Inspections Act 1996

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Special
School category:	Community special
Age range of pupils:	2 to 19 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Montague Road Warwick
Postcode:	CV34 5LW
Telephone number:	01926 491987
Fax number:	01926 407317
Appropriate authority:	The Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs H Calver
Date of previous inspection:	November 1996

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

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Teaching and learning are of very high quality; teachers and learning support assistants (LSAs) have a very clear understanding of pupils' individual needs.

It provides a challenging and relevant curriculum well matched to pupils' learning objectives, enhanced by an effective integration programme.

The standard of care is of very high quality within a happy environment.

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Ridgeway School provides for pupils aged 2 to 19 with a wide range of learning difficulties, including profound and multiple learning difficulties, severe and moderate learning difficulties and autistic spectrum disorders. The Nursery caters for part-time children requiring assessment, of whom approximately half transfer to mainstream schools. There are currently 97 pupils on roll, 63 boys and 34 girls, an increase from 82 at the last inspection. Twenty-one children attend the Nursery part-time, mostly on an assessment basis. Eighty-one pupils have statements of special educational need. There are 16 pupils (23%) of compulsory school age entitled to free school meals. There are seven pupils who come from homes where English is an additional language. The pupil/teacher ratio is 6.7:1 and the number of pupils for each full-time adult is 2.3:1.

Pupils' levels of attainment on entry are below national expectations; achievement is therefore judged on attainment on entry, targets set in individual education plans, annual reviews and statements.

The accommodation number agreed with the Department for Education and Employment (DfEE) is 50.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This is a very good school. A very high standard of education is provided by highly qualified and experienced teachers and learning support assistants (LSAs). The school is very well led, and it provides very good value for money.

What the school does well

- The ethos is excellent, relationships are of high quality and attitudes and behaviour are very good.
- Teaching and learning are of very high quality; teachers and learning support assistants (LSAs) have a very clear understanding of pupils' individual needs.
- It provides a challenging and relevant curriculum, well matched to pupils' learning objectives and enhanced by an effective integration programme.
- The standard of care is of very high quality within a happy environment.
- Leadership and management are very effective, successfully promoting the school's aims.
- Parents are effectively involved and kept well informed of their child's progress.

What could be improved

- The quality and adequacy of the accommodation to meet the full age and ability range of pupils.
- The consistency of planning and opportunities provided to promote pupils' spiritual development.
- Schemes of work for each college link course, and the provision of reports to parents for each course.
- The formal planning for under-fives in the reception class in regard to the Areas of Learning.
- The time spent on transport by a small number of pupils.

The areas for improvement will form the basis of the action plan prepared by the appropriate authority.

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school was last inspected in November 1996. All of the key issues within its direct control have been addressed. The length of the school day at Key Stages 3 and 4 now meets recommendations. The curriculum meets statutory requirements, although a modern foreign language is not yet delivered at Key Stage 3. The overall quality of teaching is now a strength of the school.

The breadth, balance and relevance of the curriculum at Key Stage 4 and Post 16 have been improved. Staff have been trained in child protection procedures, and appraisal of staff implemented. A formal health and safety policy has been approved, and storage for equipment in the hall improved. However, accommodation remains inadequate.

STANDARDS

The table summarises inspectors' judgements about how well pupils achieve in relation to their individual targets by the time they leave the school.

Progress in:	by age 5	by age 11	by age 16	by age 19	Key
Speaking and listening	A	A	A	A	very good A
Reading	B	B	B	B	good B
Writing	B	B	B	B	satisfactory C
Mathematics	A	A	A	A	unsatisfactory D
Personal, social and health education	A	B	B	B	poor E
other personal targets set at annual reviews or in IEPs*	A	A	A	A	

* IEPs are individual education plans for pupils with special educational needs.

The school, each term, sets challenging individual targets for every pupil. Procedures for assessing, recording and reporting on pupils' progress are of high quality. Nationally accredited courses at Key Stage 4 and Post 16 have been introduced to raise standards. The successful implementation of the Literacy and Numeracy Strategies is proving to be effective in raising pupils' levels of achievement. A high proportion of pupils benefit from targets set in the integration programme.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good. Pupils like school, are enthusiastic and work hard for sustained periods.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Very good at all times, despite the challenging behaviour of a few pupils.
Personal development and relationships	Relationships are excellent and pupils' independence skills are very well developed.
Attendance	Very good, although a few pupils have lengthy absences for medical reasons.

Pupils are, for the most part, very attentive in lessons and respond enthusiastically to skilled questioning. Behaviour is very good and is effectively encouraged by the school's behaviour management policy. Relationships between pupils, and with staff, are excellent; pupils are well prepared for their next stage in life. Attendance levels are very good; parents report no difficulties in pupils attending school.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	aged up to 5	Aged 5-11	aged 11-16	aged over 16
Lessons seen overall	Very good	Very good	Very good	Very good

Inspectors make judgements about teaching in the range: excellent; very good; good; satisfactory; unsatisfactory; poor; very poor. 'Satisfactory' means that the teaching is adequate and strengths outweigh weaknesses.

The quality of teaching is very good throughout the school. Almost all of the lessons seen were either good, very good or, occasionally, excellent. Two-thirds were very good or better. No lessons were unsatisfactory. Teachers' expectations of pupils' behaviour and response are very high and are well promoted through very effective behaviour management strategies. Teachers and LSAs are well-qualified, skilled practitioners, with very good knowledge and understanding of the learning and care needs of their pupils. Very good lesson planning ensures that pupils have appropriate tasks and effective support to maximise their learning opportunities. Teaching is effectively informed by high quality assessment procedures linked to individual termly targets.

The National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies have been successfully implemented, and adapted appropriately to meet pupils' needs through signing and multi-sensory experiences. Pupils' communication needs are further enhanced through an effective speech and language programme, well supported by the speech and language therapist.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Very good. National Curriculum requirements are met, apart from a modern foreign language at Key Stage 3. Provision for information and communication technology (ICT) is being well developed. An effective integration programme enhances pupils' curricular experiences.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	No additional provision is made for pupils with English as an additional language.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Good overall. Moral and social development is very good, cultural development is good, but opportunities for spiritual development are not consistently well promoted.
How well the school cares for its pupils	The standards of care and support for pupils are outstanding. Procedures for monitoring and reviewing academic and personal development are exceptionally good.

The quality of the curriculum and the range of learning opportunities are very good. Planning is well structured to ensure full curriculum coverage and is well co-ordinated. Very good provision is made for the specific special educational needs of pupils. At Key Stage 4 and Post 16, accredited courses are provided and, at Post 16, access to college link courses. However, schemes of work for these courses are not available and reports on achievements are not provided.

All pupils are valued and treated with care, respect, understanding and dignity. The moral, social and cultural development of pupils is very well promoted.

The school has effectively addressed deficiencies in the curriculum identified in the last report, although the personal and social education policy has yet to be fully agreed and implemented.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Very good overall. The headteacher provides outstanding leadership and has established an excellent ethos, effectively promoting high standards.
How well the appropriate authority fulfils its responsibilities	The governing body has a very good understanding of the school's needs and provides effective support in shaping the future direction of the school.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Very good. Clear targets for improvement are set, reviewed, monitored and evaluated.
The strategic use of resources	Very good. Management and the governors strive to ensure best value in any spending decisions.

The headteacher provides excellent leadership and is well supported by a very able deputy and strong core management team. Arrangements for management meetings work well and ensure effective communication, but not all are minuted. Planning for school improvement is very good and effectively continues to move the school forward.

The governing body is effectively involved in the strategic management of the school and is committed to achieving high standards and best value for money. Given the high quality of teaching and standards achieved, the school gives very good value for money.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children like school and make good progress. • Teaching is good. • Behaviour is good. • They are well informed on progress. • The school is well led and managed. • The school works closely with parents and they are comfortable about approaching staff. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The amount of work given to do at home. • A more interesting range of activities outside lessons.

The inspectors' findings confirm the very positive views expressed by parents. More detailed information or clarification about homework and activities outside school lessons would be helpful to parents.

PART B: COMMENTARY

WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL

The ethos is excellent, relationships are of high quality and attitudes and behaviour are very good.

1. The school is very successful in achieving its stated aims. It provides a safe, stimulating environment, in which pupils are valued and treated with respect. The quality of relationships is excellent. Pupils work well together in pairs and small groups, they co-operate very well with the adults and are keen to respond to questions and enjoy and celebrate success. They are very aware of the needs of others, especially of pupils less able than themselves and are, for the most part, patient, awaiting their turn to respond. Teachers and learning support assistants (LSAs) work together very effectively as class teams, and work hard to provide a challenging environment, in which children are happy and motivated to achieve. The staff are very successful in meeting the school's aim to encourage pupils to maximise their potential and develop into confident, adaptable, responsive adults.
2. The school is very committed to high achievement and is developing courses at Key Stage 4 and Post 16, which are nationally accredited. These have been successfully introduced since the last inspection report and formed part of the action plan. The careful monitoring and evaluation of pupils' progress effectively ensures that pupils are achieving in line with their potential. This information is positively conveyed to pupils, which appropriately enhances their self-esteem.

Teaching and learning are of very high quality; teachers and (LSAs) have a very clear understanding of pupils' individual needs.

3. Teaching throughout the school is of very high quality and is matched by the high quality of pupils' learning. Of the lessons seen, 97 per cent were good or better and of these two thirds were very good and a few were excellent. An example of this excellent practice was an English/drama lesson at Key Stage 3, in which the teacher made very imaginative use of music, language and movement to encourage pupils to take part in role play, with excellent results. Teachers are very well qualified and experienced in a wide range of special needs, and in a variety of different teaching styles and approaches, which effectively promote good learning. Teachers have very high expectations of pupils' behaviour and response, effectively promoted through the use of firm and positive behaviour management strategies, which is a strength of the school. They are well supported by the very good, often excellent, work of the learning support assistants (LSAs) who have an impressive range of qualifications and experience. Adults have excellent relationships with pupils and have a very clear understanding of both their special educational and academic needs. Pupils gain in confidence and in self-esteem and are effectively encouraged to develop their independence skills.
4. Teachers' lesson planning is very good and ensures that pupils are given appropriate tasks and good support to maximise their learning opportunities. This means that pupils show interest in their activities and work at a good pace. Teaching is effectively informed by the high quality assessment procedures which clearly identify the learning needs of each pupil, linked to the termly targets in their individual education plans. Learning support assistants are effectively used to record pupils' responses, for example, with a pupil with profound difficulties 'tracking' an object for the first time.
5. The school has successfully implemented the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies, well supported by governors, especially in numeracy. These initiatives are very well led by the co-ordinators, who are continuing to build on the range of resources

required to maintain the interest and enthusiasm of teachers and pupils alike. The numeracy resources being developed are of particularly high quality. Teachers have imaginatively adapted strategies to meet the needs of their pupils through good use of signing and multi-sensory experiences for pupils with the most severe learning difficulties. Pupils' communication skills are further enhanced through an effective speech and language programme, delivered in co-operation with the speech and language therapist. It is planned to develop this further and for its effectiveness to be monitored and evaluated.

It provides a challenging and relevant curriculum well matched to pupils' learning objectives, enhanced by an effective integration programme.

6. The quality of the curriculum and range of learning opportunities are very good, and are well matched to pupils' needs. National Curriculum requirements are being met, except in regard to the teaching of a modern foreign language at Key Stage 3, although it is planned to introduce this next year. Long and medium-term planning is well structured to ensure a breadth and balance of curriculum coverage and is very well co-ordinated. National Curriculum Programmes of Study are modified at three levels and effectively identify key individual learning objectives, experiences and activities.
7. The curriculum at Key Stage 4 and Post 16 is continuing to develop. Accreditation is provided through the Accreditation for Life and Living scheme and the National Skills Profile. Pupils are being prepared to be as independent as possible and to make choices based on experience. Post 16 students have access to college link courses, but the college provides no schemes of work to identify what will be taught and no reports are received to indicate their achievements. Opportunities for experiencing the world of work or mini-enterprise activities are being developed.
8. The school is very successful in promoting the moral, social and cultural development of its pupils, but less so the spiritual development, where the opportunities provided are inconsistent. All pupils are treated with care, respect, understanding and dignity. In lessons, pupils are given many opportunities to work together, to learn to take turns, to listen to each other and to care for others. For example, pupils with communication difficulties are given time to express themselves. Integration links with mainstream schools give very good opportunities for social integration, and targets have been set for all pupils to have this experience by 2001. Plans are clear on how these targets are to be met. Currently, there is no additional provision from the authority's support service for pupils with English as an additional language. However, the school is planning to 'buy in' some support when funding for this service is delegated next year.
9. Cultural development is well promoted through a wide range of visits to art galleries, museums and the theatre, for example, in the recent 'history week', visits to historical sites and to HMS Belfast in London. Major festivals of a number of religions are celebrated and there are good links with a local church.

The standard of care is of very high quality within a happy environment.

10. The standard of care and the support given to pupils, and to their families, is outstanding, and this is confirmed by the views of parents. There are very good examples of support given to a child and to the parents if, on the rare occasions, any instances of bullying occur or if, for some reason, a child is experiencing difficulties. Any problems that arise are swiftly dealt with, sometimes before the parent is aware. The school has effectively taken steps to ensure all staff are aware of child protection procedures and have undertaken training. There is a strong emphasis given to personal and social education (PSE), including health; a new PSE policy is being introduced but has yet to be fully agreed. Currently, the PSE curriculum is incorporated into all of the

curriculum activities of the school; for many pupils, a high priority is in developing their skills in feeding, toileting and in dressing themselves, in order to improve their levels of independence. These skills are well taught and there is good liaison with other professionals, for example, the speech therapist over feeding techniques.

11. The school has established very effective procedures for monitoring and reviewing pupils' academic and personal progress and achievements. There is a termly evaluation of each pupil's individual learning objectives, which informs the next term's objectives. The objectives are set and reviewed at the annual review and progress is recorded in each pupil's progress file. The high quality of personal support for pupils effectively promotes their very good achievements.

Leadership and management are very effective, successfully promoting the school's aims.

12. The overall leadership and management of the school is very good and that of the headteacher is excellent. She is very well supported by a talented deputy and a strong and enthusiastic core management team. There is a clear vision of the way forward for the school, in spite of the many uncertainties presented by plans for special schools' re-organisation. There is an excellent ethos which very effectively promotes high standards of achievement.
13. The governing body is very closely involved in the strategic management of the school and is well led by its acting chair of governors. The governors are very committed to the achievement of high standards and to the principles of best value for money. A good example of this is the headteacher's securing of a much more favourable contract for the disposal of clinical waste. The governors have not, however, considered ways of evaluating the cost effectiveness of major spending decisions.
14. Planning for school improvement is very good and all staff are constantly seeking ways to improve further their good practice. The school's performance is being monitored and assessed against accredited assessment criteria by participating in the Equals target setting project. This information indicates that the school is performing above average in all areas. There are good systems and procedures in place for regular management meetings, although not all are regularly minuted, which is a weakness in terms of effective communication.
15. Resources are used very efficiently, with good systems for staff to bid for finance to be considered against the school's overall priorities. There are sound financial reasons for a large carry-forward in the budget in the last financial year. For the current year there has been a substantial increase in expenditure to the benefit of pupils. Specific grants are appropriately used for improvement. Financial control is sound, as confirmed by a recent auditor's report which had no major recommendations.

Parents are effectively involved and kept well informed of their child's progress.

16. Parents are very closely involved with staff in supporting their child's development and achievements. There is effective collaboration on programmes to develop pupils' skills in toileting, feeding, dressing and in communication through the use of symbols and signs, for example, classes in Makaton signing are held for parents. The liaison with parents and the procedures for induction in the Nursery are very good; all parents receive a home visit and when children move on to the reception class they have the opportunity to meet all the staff. Throughout the school, parents are kept very well informed of objectives set, and progress made, through termly meetings and through the high quality

annual reviews and reports. A very high proportion of parents responding to the questionnaire (98%) reported that they are well informed about the progress their child is making.

WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED

The quality and adequacy of the accommodation to meet the full age and ability range of pupils.

17. The accommodation, which was reported as being inadequate at the last inspection, continues to be so, apart from the nursery facilities. The external fabric of the building is in poor condition and needs redecorating, and most teaching areas are too small for the current needs of pupils, many of whom require large apparatus and equipment. The life skills area on the first floor continues to be inaccessible to pupils with mobility difficulties. Facilities for older pupils, for example, in physical education, are not available on site. Improvements have been effected in the multi-purpose hall by the creation of storage for dining furniture, but it still remains a circulation area. The use of temporary mobile classrooms, although of a reasonable size, is unsatisfactory, and in one, water has to be provided by the use of a mobile container which requires filling frequently. The small hydrotherapy pool, built since the last inspection, is proving to be a valuable asset, particularly for pupils with mobility difficulties. Pupils and students at Key Stage 4 and Post 16 do not have access to appropriate accommodation and specialist facilities, to which they are entitled.
18. The local education authority (LEA) has plans to develop a larger, merged special school on this site and consequently major spending decisions on the part of the LEA and the school have been on hold. At the present time, there appears to be uncertainty about approval of the LEA's plans for re-organisation.

The consistency of planning and opportunities to promote pupils' spiritual development.

19. There is an inconsistency in which opportunities for the promotion of pupils' spiritual development are planned across the school. When such opportunities are provided for reflection, with music and a short period of silence, pupils are not always adequately prepared to participate beneficially.

Schemes of work for each college link course and the provision of reports to parents for each course.

20. The school has good link course arrangements in horticulture and craft with a local college, but it does not have information about the schemes of work to be taught related to knowledge, skills and understanding. Reports are not, therefore, being provided on students' achievements on these courses.

The formal planning for under-fives in the reception class in regard to the Areas of Learning.

21. The quality of provision in the nursery and in the reception class is very good. However, the formal part of the planning for the reception class addresses Key Stage 1 subjects rather than the Areas of Learning. However, the classroom practice does address these areas.

The time spent on transport by a small number of pupils.

22. For a small number of pupils, the time spent on transport to and from school is well over an hour, and in one case an hour and a half. This is too long and pupils are tired on arrival, which has an impact on their ability to benefit fully from the education provided.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

23. **The governing body with the local education authority should:**

- improve the quality and adequacy of the accommodation to ensure it meets the needs of the wide age and ability range of all pupils, and in particular the shortage of storage space;
- ensure that pupils' journey times are as short as possible and that all pupils arrive on time.

24. **The governing body and senior management should:**

- ensure greater consistency of planning to provide more opportunities for the promotion of pupils' spiritual development;
- secure more detailed information on the schemes of work for college link courses, and reports on students' achievements on these courses, in order to report more precisely to parents.
- improve the formal planning documentation for under fives in the reception class so that it more clearly links to the Areas of Learning and the good teaching practice in this class.

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	35
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	18

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
11	52	34	3	0	0	0

The table gives the percentage of teaching observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about lessons.

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	No of pupils
Number of pupils on the school's roll	97
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals	16

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	7

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	19
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	4

Attendance

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
	%		%
School data	6	School data	1

Both tables give the percentage of half days (sessions) missed through absence for the latest complete reporting year.

Attainment

Given the special educational needs of pupils, it is inappropriate to report on attainment measured against national standards at the end of each key stage.

Accredited certificates in the Accreditation for Life and Living scheme (A.L.L.) were awarded in July 1999 as follows:

- 1 pupil at Key Stage 4: 3 modules at introductory level.
- 3 pupils at Post 16: 7 modules at introductory level.

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	
Black – African heritage	
Black – other	
Indian	6
Pakistani	
Bangladeshi	
Chinese	
White	64
Any other minority ethnic group	

There were no exclusions

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: YR – Y13

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	13
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	6.7
Average class size	9

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Education support staff: YR – Y13

Total number of education support staff	24
Total aggregate hours worked per week	774

Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage		
Black – African heritage		
Black – other		
Indian		
Pakistani		
Bangladeshi		
Chinese		
White		
Other minority ethnic groups		

This table gives the number of exclusions, which may be different from the number of pupils excluded.

Financial information

Financial year	1999
	£
Total income	879,134
Total expenditure	879,588
Expenditure per pupil	9,068
Balance brought forward from previous year	72,444
Balance carried forward to next year	71,990

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	97
Number of questionnaires returned	41

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	73	27	0	0	0
My child is making good progress in school.	56	41	0	2	0
Behaviour in the school is good.	54	39	0	0	7
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	41	29	7	0	22
The teaching is good.	78	20	0	0	2
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	78	20	2	0	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	83	15	0	0	2
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	73	17	0	0	10
The school works closely with parents.	71	27	2	0	0
The school is well led and managed.	83	12	2	0	2
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	49	32	2	0	17
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	51	20	5	7	17