

Inspection of Ridgewood School

Barnsley Road, Scawsby, Doncaster, South Yorkshire DN5 7UB

Inspection dates: 13 and 14 December 2022

Overall effectiveness

Good

The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Sixth-form provision	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Previous inspection grade	Requires improvement

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils attending Ridgewood School benefit from a good quality of education. Pupils behave well and have positive attitudes towards school. They attend regularly. Staff and leaders manage pupils' behaviour well. This is particularly impressive given the cumbersome nature of the school site and the use of many standalone school buildings.

Pupils are well prepared for life after school. Their destinations are appropriate and ambitious. The support available for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) has improved. However, there remains more to do to ensure pupils who struggle to read fluently benefit from consistent support at the school.

A wide range of extra-curricular clubs are available. Leaders track attendance at these to help increase the number of pupils who benefit from these opportunities. Leaders also survey pupils on a regular basis to help understand what is going well and what needs to improve. Appropriate support is offered when pupils raise concerns linked to bullying and/or feeling safe at school. This is important as some pupils report hearing unkind comments more often than they would like to.

There have been several recent changes to the board of trustees at this standalone academy. Trustees are aware they have more to do to monitor the school's progress.

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

Leaders have improved the curriculum at the school. All pupils access an ambitious curriculum, including pupils with SEND and those identified as disadvantaged. The range of subjects available to those attending alternative provision has also broadened since the start of the school year.

Leaders have made changes to the time pupils have to study their subjects. For example, pupils now have more science lessons than they did previously. This allows them to cover the curriculum in greater depth. Pupils have responded well to this change. In Year 10, most pupils now study separate sciences. Recognising that the uptake of modern foreign languages in key stage 4 was low, leaders have appointed additional staff and introduced an optional after-school GCSE German course. They have also introduced a new languages course in the sixth form. These changes to the curriculum have been well received by the school community.

Pupils' academic experiences in many subjects are positive. The areas identified as needing to improve at the previous inspection in 2019 have been rightly prioritised. The mathematics curriculum, for example, is much improved. Pupils are well taught in mathematics by teachers who use detailed lesson plans. Assessment is embedded throughout lessons, and pupils can remember more of what they have been taught. Their results in public mathematics examinations are also much improved. Leaders are currently adapting the provision in mathematics for the weakest pupils to ensure they too remember more of what they have been taught.

Leaders are aware of which subjects are more established and which currently require support. For example, leaders have recently prioritised support for the English department. They are modifying the curriculum to help improve the quality of pupils' written work. Leaders have also introduced separate support to help pupils who are not fluent readers. However, this support is in its early stages of development. Not all pupils identified as needing this help are currently receiving it.

The sixth form is popular. It is well led. An ever-diverse range of subjects are on offer for students. Several sixth-form lessons were visited during the inspection. In all cases, students were benefiting from teachers who were subject experts. Students are exceptionally positive about their experiences in the sixth form. They enjoy the school's wider enrichment opportunities, which include sporting, academic and other activities. Students receive appropriate pastoral care and careers guidance.

Leaders regularly seek the views of pupils. This helps to identify concerns that pupils may have. It also helps leaders to understand where pupils are thriving academically. However, staff have not extensively gathered pupils' views on their personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education lessons. Addressing this is important, because although the PSHE curriculum is well mapped out, many pupils told inspectors that it was their least favourite lesson. Some pupils had gaps in what they could remember from their PSHE lessons.

Pupils with SEND are well catered for. Pupils' individual needs are identified by leaders of SEND and then shared with staff. Teachers use this information when planning lessons. Leaders of SEND have begun to quality assure teachers' use of these plans, to check that pupils' needs are consistently met throughout school. Leaders have plans to make these checks on a more regular basis. The needs of pupils with SEND are recognised in other ways too. For example, in addition to the school's well-managed seclusion room, a separate space is available for pupils with SEND. This allows the more vulnerable pupils to reflect on any incidents of poor behaviour in a safe and appropriate environment.

There have been several changes to the personnel on the board of trustees. The board is currently co-chaired by two trustees who began their roles in summer 2022. The co-chairs understand the improvements needed at board level. This is important as the board members are not currently doing all that they can to support leaders and are not holding leaders fully to account for the quality of education offered at the school. For example, they do not routinely challenge leaders on their use of the pupil premium. Their oversight of pupils at alternative provision is also unclear. They, and other school leaders, are mindful of staff workload.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders have an appropriate understanding of safeguarding. As a result, there is an effective culture of safeguarding throughout the school. Leaders keep detailed records when concerns about pupils arise. They work with external agencies, in addition to offering in-school support, to help keep pupils safe.

Leaders are mindful of topical safeguarding matters and take these into account when planning the PSHE curriculum. For example, following the recent national commentary about tackling inappropriate sexual behaviours, leaders have launched their own '10 things to remember' campaign. This has been well received by pupils.

Leaders make necessary checks when appointing new staff. They are currently tightening whistle-blowing arrangements to ensure staff are fully aware of how to raise concerns about other adults in school.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Some pupils, who leaders have identified as needing help to read fluently, are not receiving appropriate support. This limits their ability to access the curriculum fully. Leaders should ensure that all pupils who need help to read are provided with appropriate support.
- Leaders do not routinely check that the PSHE curriculum is being well received by pupils. This limits the impact of what is otherwise a well-planned curriculum. Leaders should quality assure the PSHE curriculum more regularly, ensuring they better understand what pupils can recall from this subject.
- Trustees do not hold leaders to account thoroughly enough. Furthermore, they do not keep comprehensive records of the work they do to support the school. The oversight they have of the school is less comprehensive than it should be. Trustees should review their fulfilment of essential governance duties, ensuring they are doing all they can to support and challenge leaders with their school improvement priorities.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use information from Ofsted Parent View when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

In the report, '[disadvantaged pupils](#)' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route.

School details

Unique reference number	137603
Local authority	Doncaster
Inspection number	10255722
Type of school	Secondary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1,400
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	250
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Berbet Esmilda Lynds and Andrea Louise Brayford-Ryder (acting co-chairs)
Principal	Andrew Peirson
Website	http://www.ridgewoodschool.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	12 and 13 March 2019, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school is the only school within the single-academy trust known legally as 'The Academy @ Ridgewood Trust'. The school is currently considering joining a larger multi-academy trust.
- The school uses eight alternative providers of education. Two of these are registered providers and subject to inspection by Ofsted. The other six are unregistered providers.
- Through its careers programme, the school meets the requirements of the Baker Clause, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 13 with information about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- The inspectors met with the principal and most members of the school's senior leadership team. A discussion was held with three representatives from the board of trustees, including the acting co-chairs and the vice-chair.
- To evaluate the quality of education, deep dives were carried out in mathematics, science, design technology, geography and history. These involved meeting subject leaders, reviewing curriculum plans, visiting lessons, speaking to teachers, talking to pupils about their learning and looking at samples of their work.
- The school's PSHE curriculum was also reviewed. Inspectors reviewed the provision for pupils with SEND, in addition to the school's strategy to support pupils to read.
- As part of the evaluation of the effectiveness of safeguarding, the school's safeguarding policies and procedures and other records were reviewed. The checks made when appointing new staff were scrutinised.
- An inspector visited three of the unregistered alternative providers of education used by the school. The inspector spoke by telephone to several of the other settings.
- The views of parents and carers, staff and pupils who responded to Ofsted's surveys were also fully considered.

Inspection team

James Duncan, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
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Stuart Voyce	His Majesty's Inspector
Steve Willacy	Ofsted Inspector
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