

Ridgewood School Intermediate School

Ridgewood School

Intermediate School 093

**66 – 56 Forest Avenue Ridgewood
Queens
NY, 11385**

Principal: George Foley

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Cambridge Education**

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Part 1: The School Context

Information about the school

This is a large middle school serving a community where there are challenging social and economic circumstances. It has a large number of students eligible for free school meals and 65% of the students do not have English as their home language. It has been chosen as an:

- iTeach iLearn pilot school
- New York City Collaborative Community of Practice
- Region Four Excel School
- America's Choice National Model School
- Partner School for City Hall Academy.

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Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The principal has a very clear vision for the school, which is shared by his staff. He has an accurate view of what the school does well and how it can continue to improve.
- The school has established a `can do` culture in which staff and students feel safe, secure and valued.
- Staff makes good use of technology to help students to learn.
- Teachers make learning interesting so that students enjoy their classes, work hard and attend regularly.
- Students' behavior is good because they understand and adhere to the high expectations set by their teachers.
- Staff is dedicated and committed to continuous improvement through reflecting on their current practice and looking for ways to develop it.
- The school has good systems for supporting new teachers and helping them to develop their growing skills.
- Test results have improved in the last two years because of the school's analysis of data and targeted support for students in the areas that they found most difficult.
- The school has good systems for identifying and supporting the students who find learning difficult and those for whom English is not their home language.
- The school promotes good collaboration with other agencies and organizations.
- Students and their parents recognize and appreciate the dedication, commitment and care shown by the principal and his teachers.

What the school needs to improve

- Continue to support teachers in reflecting on and refining their current classroom practice.
- Develop intervention strategies to identify and improve the performance of the most able students.
- Maximize the effectiveness of the increased use of technology to aid learning by providing support for its maintenance and use in classes.
- Sharpen up the expertise of teachers in using the quantitative and qualitative data available in order to identify and adopt the most appropriate teaching strategies to improve students' academic performance.

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Part 3: Main Findings

Overall Evaluation

This is a well-developed school with some significant strengths.

The principal gives very good leadership and has established an excellent culture where every child matters and staff members are committed to helping their students achieve the highest standards they can.

How well the school meets New York City's evaluation criteria.

Quality Statement 1: School leaders and faculty consistently gather data and use it to understand what each student knows and is able to do and to monitor and facilitate the student's progress over time.

This area of the school's work is overall well developed.

The school makes very good use of data to check how well individuals and groups of students are doing. This analysis enables the school to have an accurate view of how successful it is in helping students to learn and to reach the grade levels expected. It also helps the school to evaluate the success of initiatives to improve learning because trends over time are analyzed. These show the school being successful in raising standards and in identifying the most appropriate areas to focus extra support for maximum impact. The analysis of data enables the school to check how well it is doing compared to schools in similar circumstances. While these comparisons show this school to be doing particularly well, staff is not complacent about these successes and is regularly looking at the next upward step and how to best achieve it. For example, they know they are successful in mathematics and ELA and are transposing the strategies that have led to those successes to other subjects. The school has a large population of students whose home language is not English, some of whom need extra support to succeed. Staff members rise to this challenge and do not perceive the students' lack of English as an insurmountable obstacle to learning or an excuse for failure. On the contrary, they go the extra mile to provide the required intervention strategies to ensure all students meet with success. The effective analysis of data gives teachers the foundation on which to build, by identifying where they are being particularly successful and where they need to further refine their work to improve the performance of their students. Having been very successful at identifying students with potential obstacles to learning, the school now needs to devise strategies to identify the high fliers and help them fly higher.

Quality Statement 2: School leaders and faculty consistently use available data to understand each student's next learning step. Through collaborative planning and student and parent engagement, they set high goals for improving teaching practice and accelerating each student's learning.

This area of the school's work is well developed.

The principal sets high expectations for all those in the school. These are well understood

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and accepted by students, staff and parents. Teachers and students therefore expect good behavior in classes and around the school. They expect good manners and mutual respect. These high expectations ensure that the school provides an environment where students feel safe and secure and are therefore able to learn, to ask questions and participate in discussions knowing that their views and concerns are taken seriously.

Within this caring culture teachers work collaboratively to set long term goals for improvement and to establish the smaller intermediate steps that will make them achievable. They measure progress towards goals through formal assessments and informal ongoing records of what students have achieved or struggled with in classes. The combination of this quantitative and qualitative data gives staff a proficient picture of what is going well and what needs attention. The TANs are useful for recording day-to-day comments on what has gone well or not so well for individual students. The school could look towards refining the use of TANs, reviewing how this information links to the more quantitative data to give an overall rounded picture of how well a student is doing and what the next steps are. It would be useful to engage students in evaluating their own work, identifying where they have been successful or struggled and getting them to set their own targets for improvement with teacher guidance.

The Comprehensive Education Plan effectively identifies whole school issues for improvement that derive from the analysis of qualitative and quantitative data. It shows clearly what the main priorities for improvement are and how to tackle them. All evaluations are based firmly on the rubrics and the standards and there is a common understanding of what success at a given standard looks like so there is consistency of expectation. The Comprehensive Education Plan is the result of staff reflecting on their own performance as evidenced through data and shows their continuing commitment to school improvement and dedication to the students in their care.

Quality Statement 3: The school aligns its instructional activity and resources around its focused plans for accelerating learning for each student.

This area of the school's work is well developed.

The effective use of data gives the school a very good basis on which to build its curriculum. Teachers and students are very familiar with the rubrics and standards and staff is committed to giving all students activities to maximize their chance of achieving their grades. The school is particularly good at intervention strategies for those students who find learning hard or whose capacity in English could become a barrier to learning. Teachers recognize the potential barriers that some of these students face and go out of their way to devise learning activities to get around them.

A particular strength of the school is the use of technology to aid learning. Computers are seen as an increasingly useful tool to support learning and teachers are committed to making the most effective use of computers and interactive whiteboards. Students regularly use laptops for their assignments and teachers use the technology creatively to give students resources to aid their learning. This was shown clearly when teachers accessed mini lessons that engaged students and moved their understanding on. The school is committed to the continued development of the use of technology and there is a clear understanding that it is not a substitute for teaching but rather an extra and very powerful resource. The school needs to ensure that as the use of technology grows within the school, teachers' capacity to get the best out of it also grows. This will mean

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finding cost effective methods of maintaining the equipment so that teachers are not faced with frustrating delays because of hardware or software problems, and providing teachers with the ongoing support and training they need to implement the most effective teaching strategies using the technology.

Teachers engage the students in their learning very well so that they pay attention in class and concentrate on their tasks. Students say that teachers make learning interesting and that they enjoy school. This is confirmed by the good attendance rates and the numbers of students who take an active part in opportunities beyond the normal school day. The school provides very good support after school for students who need extra help to reach their grade levels. The respect the students have for their teachers is demonstrated in classes and in the way students are confident that their teachers will take their concerns seriously and treat them with the respect they deserve. Teachers also go the extra mile in trying to provide opportunities for their students that they might not otherwise enjoy, as in taking some of them snowboarding.

Quality Statement 4: The development of instructional leadership, staff, and capacity are aligned around the school's collaboratively established goals for accelerating the learning of each student.

This area of the school's work is overall well developed.

The school has clear expectations for the teachers it selects. It is clear that staff is committed to school's caring and committed culture with its clear focus on raising achievement of the students and doing what it takes to ensure their success. The cohesive nature of the staff team comes across in talking with them collectively and individually and in the way they reflect the school's culture in all that they do in and around the school.

Aligned to this are the effective professional development structure the school has and the commitment of staff to continuous self-reflection and improvement. Professional development is aligned very closely to the results students achieve and these can be tracked to the by teachers. This enables teachers to reflect on how well particular strategies worked, where their teaching strengths lie and where they need to improve. Self-reflection is part of the school's culture and staff work very well collaboratively to evaluate how successful particular strategies have been and how they could be improved. Although this is a highly successful school staff are not complacent and do not relax in their pursuit of excellence. Whole school goals are clearly stated and agreed and are based upon a comprehensive analysis of data on student achievement. Thus the school recognizes its achievements but also knows what it has to do to maintain its current strengths and build upon them to bring all areas of its work to the same high level. There is an accepted recognition among staff that this is a journey that never ends and that it requires commitment and constant hard work. This is the culture that staff buys into when they join the school and the principal has been very successful in creating a cohesive team with such a large school. This is mainly down to his very clear vision for the future of his school and sharing this with all staff and students. They know that in the learning journey there is no finish line. Consequently staff constantly review plans and procedures and check whether they are still as relevant now as when they were initiated. Regular cabinet meetings ensure that issues are picked up early and dealt with effectively and efficiently. This results in a school where things run very smoothly on a day-to-day basis and the occasional difficulty does not become a crisis. The calm assured manner of the

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principal conveys a sense of warmth and good organization so that systems and procedures run smoothly throughout and beyond the school day making the school an attractive, pleasant environment in which to work and learn.

Quality Statement 5: The school has built-in structures for evaluating each student's progress throughout the year, recognizing weaknesses in its improvement plans and teaching practices, and flexibly adapting plans and practices to meet its goals for accelerated learning.

This area of the school's work is well developed.

This is a school where reflection and self-review are an integral part of the culture. Staff and students are committed to lifelong learning. Consequently, staff regularly reviews how successfully their plans are helping to achieve their stated goals. The fundamental basis of this reflection is the outcomes for students in terms of their academic and personal development. The staff is committed to helping their students to grow up with the skills and attributes they need to be successful and responsible adults. This is a genuine learning community for all who belong to it. The staff needs to continually review how effectively they balance the quantitative and qualitative data to give the most accurate picture of how individual and groups of students are developing.

The school is aware of the good work it has done in raising standards in mathematics and ELA and how it can use the strategies that have brought about these successes in other areas of the curriculum. There are good systems and regular reviews of ongoing plans to check whether they are on target to achieve the long-term goals by building in interim check points. Long-term goals are always related closely to the outcomes for the students and tied in closely with City and State standards. Their teachers monitor the progress of individual students on a regular basis and any deviations are investigated to discover the probable cause and therefore the possible solutions. Flexibility is key to the school's success. Plans are firm enough to give a clear steer to staff and students but the constant reviewing of them means that that they can be adjusted in the light of emerging issues and findings.

Other key observations

This is a good school. The secret of its success is the inspirational leadership of its principal. He knows what he wants his students to achieve and has attracted a committed and dedicated team of teachers to help him to achieve this. He has instituted efficient and effective systems to ensure the school runs smoothly and that students feel comfortable; they can learn, free from worries and anxieties. The academy approach gives teachers and students the opportunity to get to know each other well and to thrive within a well-organised community where mutual respect is an expectation. However, successful as the school is, there is no complacency as the staff strives for continued improvement, with constant review and reflection as an integral element of the life of the school. Consequently, this is a school where the principal knows how well it is doing and what is needed, not only to maintain that success but to build upon it.

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Part 4: Evaluation Criteria Grade Summary

Quality Statement 1: School leaders and faculty consistently gather data and use it to understand what each student knows and is able to do and to monitor and facilitate the student's progress over time.	o	✓	+
<p>1.1 The school uses available data (e.g., diagnostic, formative, and summative assessments, students work products, standards-based portfolios, attendance, descriptive review, security data, etc.) and generates its own to provide an objective, constantly updated understanding of how well each student, classroom, grade level, and other important categories of students and the school are:</p> <p>(1) currently performing, and (2) progressing over time, on English Language Arts, mathematics, and other important academic subjects.</p> <p>Criteria for measuring student progress are "objective" when they are</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • standards-based, • consistent across students, • capable of revealing progress or a lack of it over time and ways to close the gap between current and expected practice, <p>and when they allow</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the performance of different students to be compared, and • learning activity to be broken down into component parts so strengths and weaknesses on each sub-activity may be identified. 			X
<p>1.2 The school makes effective use of the data to assess the performance and progress of students by racial and ethnic groups, English Language Learners and special education students, and all other categories of interest to the school.</p> <p>{This criterion and the next are partially aspirational as of now. City and State Report Cards and Division of Accountability and Assessment reports provide only some of the necessary data. The NYC DOE will soon provide schools with fuller access to better data.}</p>			X
<p>1.3 Performance and progress are measured based on comparisons with similar schools, with the school's own past performance, and among students, classrooms, grade levels, academic subject areas, racial and ethnic groups, and other groupings of interest within the school.</p>			X
Quality Statement 2: School leaders and faculty consistently use available data to understand each student's next learning step. Through collaborative planning and student and parent engagement, they set high goals for improving teaching practice and accelerating each student's learning.	o	✓	+
<p>2.1 Using data, school leaders and faculty engage in a collaborative process to set demanding, objectively measurable, goals for immediate and long-range improvement, and it develops plans and timeframes for reaching those goals.</p>			X
<p>2.2 Goals and plans focus on the school as a whole and on each student, classroom, grade level, academic subject and group of students whose performance or progress has been identified by the school as warranting attention.</p>		X	
<p>2.3 Particular attention is given to improving the performance and progress of students in greatest need of improvement.</p>			X
<p>2.4 High expectations are conveyed to students and parents. Students and their parents/caregivers are regularly invited to provide information about each student's performance and how to improve. That information is central to setting reasonably challenging goals and developing, evaluating, and revising plans.</p>			X
<p>2.5 Goals and plans for improving student performance and progress drive the activity of all members of the school community: leaders, staff, students, parents, and other partners</p>			X

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Quality Statement 3: The school aligns its instructional activity and resources around its focused plans for accelerating learning for each student.	o	✓	+
3.1 The school selects the curriculum based on how well it aligns with the school's high expectations and improvement plans and on the curriculum's capacity to generate meaningful interim data about progress towards goals.			X
3.2 Decisions about the use of teacher and student time are based on the organization of the day and week needed to inform teachers about each student's performance and next learning steps, set goals and plans for improved student learning, and implement and continuously improve plans for reaching stated goals.			X
3.3 Staffing decisions are driven by the needs that emerge from examining student data and by the focused plan the school develops to improve student outcomes.			X
3.4 Budgeting decisions are driven by the needs that emerge from examining student data and by the focused plan the school develops to improve student outcomes.			X
3.5 Teachers are accountable for student outcomes. The principal frequently observes classroom teaching and has a considered strategy for improving the quality of each teacher's instruction. Teachers frequently observe and support each other's classroom instruction with the goal of improving student outcomes.			X
3.6 Staff know and respect students and respond to their academic needs as well as their personal needs that affect academic performance. Each student knows and trusts an adult on the staff who is concerned about him or her.			X
3.7 Student attendance and engagement are high priorities. High rates and patterns of absences trigger immediate intervention.			X
3.8 Instructional programs actively engage students.			X
3.9 The school aligns youth development and support services around stated academic goals. Partnerships with outside bodies are routinely used to achieve academic goals.			X

Quality Statement 4: The development of instructional leadership, staff, and capacity are aligned around the school's collaboratively established goals for accelerating the learning of each student.	0	✓	+
4.1 Leaders, faculty, and staff are selected based on their high expectations for student performance and progress and based on their commitment and capacity to use data, compare outcomes within and across classrooms and schools and develop and revise plans and methods to improve performance and progress.			X
4.2 Professional development is designed to help leaders, faculty, and staff use data, self- and peer-assessments, and collaboration with peers to achieve goals for improved school and student outcomes. Professional development and self- and peer- evaluation are aligned and overlap.			X
4.3 Leaders, faculty, and staff share the same goals and frequently evaluate themselves, their interventions and each other's plans and interventions, including, when possible, by comparing outcomes across classrooms and schools. The school monitors its performance and tackles weaknesses. Even in areas where the school is successful, leadership is not complacent, but aims to improve further. The goal in all cases is to improve student and school performance and progress.			X
4.4 Planning, evaluation of results and revision of plans takes place in teams.			X
4.5 The principal is respected and has capacity to effect change.			X
4.6 The school runs smoothly. Procedures are clear and are generally followed.			X

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Quality Statement 5: The school has built-in structures for evaluating each student's progress throughout the year, recognizing weaknesses in its improvement plans and teaching practices, and flexibly adapting plans and practices to meet its goals for accelerated learning.	o	✓	+
5.1 All school plans and other interventions include frequent interim goals and diagnostic assessments of progress designed to reveal in objectively measurable ways whether the plan is reaching stated goals.		X	
5.2 Comparisons of student progress within and across classrooms and schools are used in making interim diagnostic assessments and measuring the progress of plans and interventions.			X
5.3 Information generated by interim assessments and diagnostic measures of progress and comparisons is used to revise plans immediately in order to reach stated goals. Interim and final goals are modified when data objectively demonstrate that revision is required.			X
5.4 Each plan's interim and final outcomes drive each successive phase of goal setting and improvement planning, and each successive phase is characterized by agile and flexible realignment of practices and resources to improve students' academic outcomes.			X