

John Rankin Junior School

Inspection report

Unique reference number	109825
Local authority	West Berkshire
Inspection number	377990
Inspection dates	12–13 July 2012
Lead inspector	Chris Nye HMI

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

Type of school	Junior
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	7–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	226
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Malcolm Douglas
Headteacher	Linda Valenti (executive)
Date of previous school inspection	29–30 June 2010
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Age group	7–11
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Introduction

Inspection team

Chris Nye

Her Majesty's Inspector

Mandy Snook

Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice and at the same time as that of its federated infant school. Inspectors observed teaching and learning throughout the school in 15 lessons taught by eight teachers. Some observations were undertaken jointly with the executive headteacher and deputy headteacher. Meetings were held with pupils, governors, the executive headteacher and deputy headteacher, and teaching and support staff. They observed the school's work, heard pupils read and scrutinised pupils' work. They looked at a number of documents, including the school development plans, safeguarding arrangements, attendance data, minutes of the governing body meetings, monitoring and assessment data and lesson planning documentation. Inspectors talked informally to parents and carers, and questionnaires completed by 52 parents and carers, 26 staff and 104 pupils were scrutinised.

Information about the school

John Rankin is a slightly smaller than average-sized junior school. The very large majority of pupils are of White British heritage and the remainder come from a range of backgrounds, although only a few speak English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is below average. The proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs supported at school action plus, or with statements, is slightly above average. Their needs mainly relate to moderate learning difficulties, behavioural, social or emotional difficulties or speech, language and communication needs. There has been a 60% turnover of teaching staff in the past two years.

The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set out the minimum expectations of pupils' attainment and progress.

The school operates as part of a hard federation with its neighbouring infant school. Although both schools maintain their own identity, they share a governing body. An executive headteacher is responsible for the leadership of both schools and the deputy headteacher undertakes the day-to-day management of the school.

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness	2
Achievement of pupils	2
Quality of teaching	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils	2
Leadership and management	2

Key findings

- Significant progress has been made in improving all areas since its last inspection and this is now a good school. It is not yet outstanding because the school needs to challenge higher ability pupils more consistently, raise attainment further and accelerate progress in mathematics. Recent initiatives to provide pupils with opportunities to use and apply their mathematical skills need embedding and although individual mathematical targets are identified, there are inconsistencies in how progress towards achieving them is monitored.
- Pupils' behaviour in lessons and around the school is good, but to become outstanding policies and procedures need to be more consistently applied across the school. The school provides good opportunities for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and operates well as a cohesive community.
- Since the last inspection, achievement in reading and writing across the school has improved significantly due to the strong emphasis that is placed on developing literacy skills across the curriculum. Pupils say that they enjoy their learning and the very large majority of parents and carers who returned the questionnaire feel that their children are safe, that they are taught well and have their needs met.
- The school has benefited from being a part of a federation, which is now well established. Leaders and managers at all levels, including the governing body, have a very clear understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. Rigorous management of teachers' performance has successfully addressed past weaknesses in teaching and the curriculum. Leaders' drive and ambition are bringing about rapid and secure change which is resulting in improved outcomes for pupils. There is a good capacity to maintain this positive direction in the future.
- Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs are well supported and make good progress, especially in reading and writing.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- In mathematics, raise attainment further and accelerate progress by:
 - ensuring that activities consistently challenge higher ability pupils
 - embedding further opportunities for pupils to apply their mathematical

- skills to practical situations
 - ensuring greater consistency in monitoring the progress that pupils are making towards achieving their individual targets.
- Further improve pupils' behaviour by ensuring that behaviour management policies and systems are consistently applied across the school.

Main report

Achievement of pupils

The large majority of parents and carers who returned their questionnaires said that they feel their child makes good progress, and the pupils themselves are very positive about their learning and progress. Inspectors agree with the view that pupils make good progress relative to their starting points and in particular since the previous inspection. Achievement is good because effective teaching successfully encourages pupils to be enthusiastic and curious learners, both independently and in teams. Inspectors observed many examples of such well-motivated learning that resulted in pupils making good progress in lessons. For example, in an outstanding science lesson pupils were making rapid progress because they were enthusiastically collaborating in groups to explore what happened when water was added to a range of powders.

Over the past two years, and after a period of underachievement, pupils' achievement has rapidly improved, especially in reading and writing. In reading, phonics (linking letters with the sounds they make) is well taught and pupils of all abilities are actively encouraged to be enthusiastic and wide-ranging readers. As a result, attainment in reading is well above average. Writing, which had been a weaker area in the past, has rapidly improved as a result of a strong emphasis being placed on using these skills across the curriculum. Consequently, pupils' attainment in writing is above average. A particular strength is the way in which the achievement gap between boys' and girls' writing has been significantly narrowed. In each year group more than half the pupils are making better than the expected progress in reading and writing. The recent Year 6 national test results confirm the school's own assessments that the very large majority of pupils achieved the expected level in English, with well above average attaining the higher levels in reading and writing. In addition, almost all pupils made above average progress over the last three years.

Achievement in mathematics across the school varies, but is never less than satisfactory. In Year 6 attainment is average but progress is good because almost all pupils made better than expected progress over recent years, and especially this year. In other year groups, attainment and progress in mathematics are broadly satisfactory and although the school is aware of the need to accelerate progress, recent initiatives which emphasise the importance of using and applying mathematical skills are not yet fully embedded.

Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs are well supported and are

enthusiastic learners, especially in reading and writing. As a result they are making good progress and there is clear evidence that gaps in their performance are narrowing, compared with all pupils nationally, especially in Year 6. In mathematics progress has been slower, but is never less than satisfactory.

Quality of teaching

Teaching is good overall, and some lessons, especially in Years 3 and 6, is outstanding. Pupils feel that they are well taught and enjoy their lessons, and over 90% of the parents and carers who responded to the questionnaire said that they felt that their child is well taught. One parent commented that: 'The school provides an encouraging place to learn and we believe that the last academic year has been the best yet for our child.' Teaching is supported well by the planned curriculum, which meets the needs and interests of pupils and provides good opportunities for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Lessons are well structured, have clear learning objectives and take good account of prior learning. Teachers have high expectations of lower and middle ability pupils, although higher ability pupils are not always challenged sufficiently, especially in mathematics. Teaching assistants are well trained and make a significant contribution to teaching and learning because they work in close cooperation with teachers. In the best lessons, the pace of learning is good because teachers motivate pupils well and are skilled at using open-ended questioning techniques to check pupils' understanding and extend their learning. Pupils' learning is enhanced by the good use of links to other areas of the curriculum. For example, in one English lesson in Year 5 pupils were using their extensive knowledge of the impact of global warming to write persuasive letters to newspapers, politicians and fast-food companies.

Regular assessments of pupils' progress and attainment are accurate and most written guidance in pupils' books is clear, evaluative and makes a significant contribution to their learning. A particular strength is the way in which pupils assess their own and others' learning and routinely respond to teachers' comments in their books. Pupils are clear about what their targets are in English and how to achieve them. Teachers and pupils regularly up-date these, which helps maintain the pace of their learning. However, in mathematics, although pupils' work is regularly marked and individual targets are identified, in some classes the progress that pupils are making towards achieving such targets is not routinely monitored by either pupils or teachers.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

During the inspection pupils' conduct around school and in lessons was orderly and respectful. They demonstrated politeness towards adults and care for each other. The very large majority of parents and carers who responded to the questionnaire feel that behaviour is good in school. Pupils told inspectors that behaviour was generally good in school. Some staff who responded to the questionnaire indicated that the application of behaviour policies is not always consistent. Inspectors agree that behaviour in class and on the playground would be even better if there was greater consistency in how such policies are applied across the school.

Pupils told inspectors that they feel safe in school and have a good awareness of what to do if they are bullied. They can explain clearly what cyber-bullying is and are confident that the school deals well with rare instances of bullying or extreme behaviour. The school is proactive in preventing bullying and racism in all its forms and pupils have a very clear understanding of why these are wrong and how to respond appropriately to them. Key strengths are the way in which older pupils support younger ones and the strong focus that the school places on developing pupils' self-confidence and positive attitudes to learning. Pupils' views, expressed for example through the school council, are listened to and respected. Attendance is consistently above the national average.

Leadership and management

The rapid improvement of teaching, resolution of past weaknesses and consequential improvement in pupils' achievement are a direct result of the commitment of leaders at all levels and their drive to raise standards. In particular, the executive headteacher and deputy headteacher have been rigorous in holding teachers to account for the performance of their pupils. Monitoring and performance management systems for teachers effectively link the quality of teaching to pupils' progress and well-targeted professional development is provided to ensure that any weaknesses are identified and addressed. This process has been enhanced by the introduction of systems to accurately assess and track pupils' progress and attainment. The accurate analysis of data and evaluations inform improvement plans well. Leaders at all levels have a very clear understanding of where strengths and weaknesses lie. The school evaluates itself accurately. Strategic plans to drive further improvement are clear and identify appropriate priorities. Greater stability, as new staff have settled well into their roles, and the positive impact of recent changes mean the school has a good capacity to improve further.

The curriculum is good because it provides breadth and balance across all subjects, meets the pupils' needs well and effectively promotes their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The taught curriculum is well planned and is further enhanced by enrichment activities such as sporting activities and drama productions. Strong links across the curriculum help to motivate pupils' interest and enthusiasm for learning, but the school recognises that in mathematics there is scope to develop this further.

The federation works well and has had a significant impact on promoting pupils' achievement. In particular the joint leadership arrangements are effective and the governing body successfully balances its responsibilities to both federated schools. It provides an appropriate balance of challenge and support because governors know the school well, are well trained and have a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities. All safeguarding procedures are securely in place and rigorously applied. Leaders effectively promote equality and proactively tackle discrimination.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	54	42	2	2
Primary schools	14	49	32	6
Secondary schools	20	39	34	7
Special schools	33	45	20	3
Pupil referral units	9	55	28	8
All schools	16	47	31	6

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September to 31 December 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Attendance:	the regular attendance of pupils at school and in lessons, taking into account the school's efforts to encourage good attendance.
Behaviour:	how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Floor standards:	the national minimum expectation of attainment and progression measures.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the governors and headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.
Safety:	how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



13 July 2012

Dear Pupils

Inspection of John Rankin Junior School, Newbury RG14 6ES

Thank you for making us so welcome when my colleague and I inspected your school. We really enjoyed visiting your lessons, talking to you and the adults and looking at the work that you have been doing. The questionnaires that you and your parents and carers completed indicate that you feel safe and happy in school. We feel that yours is a good school.

These are the things that your school does particularly well.

- Because you are well taught, you are all doing really well, especially in reading and writing. Many of you do much better than pupils in other schools in England. You are given lots of interesting things to learn and you enjoy your lessons. I was really impressed with your theme books and how you use your reading and writing skills in lots of different subjects.
- You mostly behave well and are very kind towards each other. You have a very good understanding of how to keep yourselves safe and well.
- The leaders of the school have done a really good job in rapidly addressing past weaknesses and ensuring that you get a good education.

Although the school is doing well, there are still things that it can improve even more. We have asked the school to focus on:

- making sure that in mathematics lessons all of you are challenged, you use your skills to work out practical problems and progress towards meeting your targets is monitored better
- ensuring that everyone uses the school's behaviour policy so that your behaviour is even better than it is.

You can help by behaving well all of the time and telling your teacher if you think your tasks in mathematics are too easy.

Good luck in the future.

Yours sincerely

Chris Nye
Her Majesty's Inspector

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