

John Rankin Infant and Nursery School

Inspection report

Unique reference number	109826
Local authority	West Berkshire
Inspection number	377991
Inspection dates	12–13 July 2012
Lead inspector	Susan Gadd HMI

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

Type of school	Infant
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	208
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Malcolm Douglas
Headteacher	Linda Valenti
Date of previous school inspection	20 November 2008
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Age group	3–7
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Introduction

Inspection team

Susan Gadd

Her Majesty's Inspector

Anthony Byrne

Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice at the same time as its Federated Junior School. Inspectors visited seven class teachers and observed 11 lessons. In addition discussions were held with groups of pupils, the headteacher, the Chair of the Governing Body and members of the leadership team. Inspectors considered the responses of 78 parents and carers and 19 staff who completed questionnaires during the inspection, along with the views of pupils and looked at information about pupils' achievement, minutes from the governing body meetings, a range of school documents and pupils' work.

Information about the school

John Rankin Infant and Nursery is a slightly smaller than average-sized school. Most pupils come from White British families. A few speak English as an additional language. A smaller than average number of pupils is known to be eligible for free school meals. The proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs is also below average. This includes pupils on the autistic spectrum, those who require support in speech, language and communication as well as those with emotional, behavioural and social needs.

The school is part of a hard federation. The headteacher takes on the responsibility of the executive headteacher for the junior school. The schools share the same governing body while still maintaining their own identity.

Pupils are able to attend a breakfast club through its provision within the 'Sunshine Club' which offers all day care for children as young as two years old. The all day part of this provision did not form a part of this inspection but inspectors did observe the breakfast club. In addition a privately run after-school club is available to parents and carers; this did not form part of this inspection.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

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

- This is a good school where all adults work as a team to provide a caring environment in which to learn. There are some outstanding features. These include the exceptional relationships between staff and pupils and in particular how adults help pupils to develop their thinking skills while learning. It is not yet outstanding because teaching is good overall rather than outstanding and occasionally teaching does not challenge the more able pupils to achieve their best.
- Pupils' achievement is good. From their range of starting points at the beginning of Nursery pupils make good progress in literacy and mathematics, with a growing number making outstanding progress in Year 2. Standards in reading, writing and mathematics are above average by the end of Key Stage 1.
- Teaching is good with some outstanding practice especially in Year 2. The key strengths are the accurate assessments used to plan for pupils' individual needs and focused questioning. In a few classes pupils are not consistently provided with opportunities to refer to their targets for improvement. In addition, on some occasions teaching assistants are not used effectively during class discussions.
- Pupils behave very well in lessons and around the school. Although the school records some behaviour incidents, there is room for improvement to ensure that a systematic and consistent approach is adopted so that possible trends over time are more easily identified.
- The headteacher is passionate about improving outcomes for pupils. Along with the leadership team and the governing body very effective steps have been taken in the last three years to improve teaching, the curriculum and raise achievement. The federation has benefited the school and provided good professional development opportunities for staff. Leaders are clear about the strengths and areas for development. However, some improvement plans do not always provide specific measurable targets to help support leaders in evaluating the impact of their actions.

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What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching so that all pupils make outstanding progress in their learning by:
 - ensuring that all pupils and in particular those who are more able are consistently challenged to achieve their best
 - enabling teaching assistants to be used more effectively to support pupils' learning during class discussions
 - ensuring that pupils have consistent opportunities to refer to their targets to improve their work.
- Strengthen the impact of leadership and management at all levels by:
 - stating specific measurable targets within all development plans to reflect the school's efforts to support outstanding achievement.
- Develop a systematic approach to monitoring pupils' behaviour over time.

Main report

Achievement of pupils

Children enter the Nursery and Reception classes with very different starting points from year to year. The current children in this part of the school entered with skills broadly as expected for their age, except in communication, language and literacy where their skills were low. By the time they leave the Early Years Foundation Stage children have made good progress as a result of targeted teaching and well-thought-out activities that capture the interest of all. Children are able to make choices and develop good social skills.

Pupils' attainment at the end of Key Stage 1 has been steadily rising over the last few years and is above average, in reading, writing and mathematics. Lesson observations and the school's data show that all pupils regardless of gender, race or specific need are making at least good progress. A growing number of pupils in Year 2, and those who are disabled or have special educational needs throughout the school, are beginning to make outstanding progress. This is as a result of improved teaching and focused interventions which meet pupils' individual needs more consistently.

Observations show that daily phonics lessons (linking letters with the sounds they make) and regular guided reading sessions are beginning to accelerate pupils' literacy skills. Pupils enjoy reading and talk about books with confidence. In mathematics new resources and improvements to the curriculum are providing pupils with opportunities to apply their numeracy skills in a range of contexts and improve their progress. In The Early Years Foundation Stage the school is already taking appropriate action to further target boys to increase the number of children making outstanding progress in their writing. In Key Stage 1 the focus on 'learning maps' is

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beginning to engage and enthuse all pupils with a real desire to learn. This is proving very effective in the development of pupils' independent skills. As a result of these actions the school has been successful in narrowing the gap between the achievement of boys and girls as well as raising attainment in writing.

Quality of teaching

Although teaching is good overall, many lessons observed had some outstanding features particularly in Year 2. These included pupils learning at a rapid pace throughout the lesson while being motivated and challenged to achieve their best. Questioning was focused on developing pupils' understanding of new concepts while correcting any misconceptions. Teachers are assessing pupils as they are learning as well as using their understanding of pupils' past achievements to set appropriate tasks. However, on a few occasions the pace of learning is slow during the introduction to lessons and able pupils are not always challenged to achieve their best. Although teaching assistants are used very well during group activities they are not always used effectively during class discussions. Pupils enjoy learning and the vast majority of parents and carers who responded to the questionnaire said that they feel their child is taught well. As one parent stated: 'The teachers are very dedicated and provide a caring, fun and stimulating learning environment.' Inspection evidence concurred with this view.

A marked improvement to learning has been as a result of the introduction of 'thinking skills'. Adults and pupils regularly talk about the skills they are using to learn and work together. For example, in a literacy lesson in Year 2 where pupils were carrying out their own research on the Olympics they were discussing the importance of setting their own goals, listening to each other, recording information and investigating the different sources they had at their disposal. In another lesson 'learning maps' were used by pupils to identify what they already knew and what they wanted to find out. This, together with good teaching, is beginning to accelerate the progress that pupils are making as they move through the school. Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs make similar progress to their peers as a result of good adult support in class and through highly effective interventions at other times. Consequently, all pupils make good progress and some make outstanding progress.

Although adults regularly mark pupils' work, the level of written feedback to develop pupils' learning is stronger in literacy than in mathematics. In literacy, adults regularly write comments on pupils' next steps to learning, while in mathematics feedback is generally oral. The school is in the process of further developing marking in mathematics to be in line with literacy. Pupils are set targets to support their learning and although some pupils are aware of them others are less sure because they do not always have regular opportunities to refer to them while learning.

In the Early Years Foundation Stage there is a good balance of those activities chosen by children and those that adults lead. Targeted adult questioning encourages children to develop their vocabulary and provides adults with useful

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information to plan for children's future learning. The curriculum is tailored to meet the interests and abilities of all children. For example, in one lesson children were engaged in activities linked to the Olympics while learning about number bonds. Children threw bean bags into hoops, while others were involved in adding up the successful hits and making written records to identify the winner.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Pupils' behaviour is good both in lessons and around the school. Pupils have very positive attitudes to learning and are enthusiastic to rise to their next challenge within lessons. Strong concentration levels and good behaviour mean that lessons proceed efficiently. On rare occasions behaviour in the playground is not as consistently good as in lessons. The exceptional relationship between adults and pupils means that pupils are very confident that any incidents that occur in the playground are dealt with promptly. While the very large majority of parents and carers agreed that behaviour is good a few raised concerns about behaviour at lunchtime and how any incidents are communicated to parents and carers. The school is in the process of reviewing its communication systems with parents and carers.

Although the school keeps some detailed records on behaviour there is no systematic procedure to record and analyse behaviour trends over time. Pupils spoken to were aware of the different forms of bullying but said that bullying did not occur. They were confident that if bullying did arise it would be dealt with quickly. Pupils are very safe and enjoy coming to school as seen by their above average attendance.

Leadership and management

The highly effective headteacher, supported by a dedicated deputy headteacher and senior leadership team, has continued to improve outcomes for pupils over the last three years. The close links within the federation mean that leadership opportunities have arisen for staff and transition arrangements for pupils have strengthened. The school has been able to provide adults with regular opportunities for professional development through a cycle of monitoring and coaching. This has led to adults thinking carefully about how best to develop pupils' learning skills while developing their knowledge in a range of subjects. Development plans are used well by leaders although the impact on pupils' outcomes is not always easily measurable.

Leaders can point to marked improvements in the curriculum through developing a cross-curricular approach to learning. School trips and visitors enrich pupils' learning experiences; for example, during the inspection an Olympic torch bearer visited the school. Targeted interventions in literacy and numeracy and regular progress meetings have resulted in pupils' outcomes improving over time. All of these changes have helped with the promotion of pupils' social, moral, spiritual and cultural development.

Parent and teacher meetings are held three times a year to discuss pupils' work. The

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school is in the process of ensuring parents and carers receive even more information about the targets their children are working towards and standards achieved. Although policies are in place to ensure all staff receive an annual appraisal the school recognises that this could be implemented more consistently.

The governing body provides good challenge and holds the school to account very well. It is strategic in its thinking and asks probing questions of the leadership team to ensure outcomes improve. For example, a new assessment analyst was appointed to improve the school tracking system for progress and attainment. Governors have ensured that safeguarding requirements are met in full. The school ensures that all pupils have an equal opportunity to do well in their learning. Consequently, all pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education.

Parents and carers are involved in school life through attending literacy and numeracy workshops or coffee mornings in 'The Hub' as well as regular drop-in sessions with the headteacher. The breakfast club provides pupils with a good start to the day and meets their individual needs. Parents and carers who were spoken to appreciated the care provided by the club.

The leadership team along with the governing body have strong aspirations to become an outstanding school. Their good and improving capacity to raise achievement is demonstrated in their accomplishments since the last inspection. Marked improvements have been made in outcomes for all pupils as a result of the changes to the curriculum, the quality of teaching, and the development of pupils' independent learning skills.

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	46	46	8	0
Primary schools	8	47	40	5
Secondary schools	14	38	40	8
Special schools	28	48	20	4
Pupil referral units	15	50	29	5
All schools	11	46	38	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 2010 to 31 August 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.
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.



16 July 2012

Dear Pupils

Inspection of John Rankin Infant and Nursery School, Newbury, RG14 6EX

Thank you for making us welcome when we visited your school. We listened to what you told us, as well as observing you in lessons and the playground. We could see that you really enjoy coming to school because you have a good school!

This is what we found.

- You trust the adults around you and know that they keep you safe and look after you very well.
- Your behaviour and attendance are good and you enjoy learning.
- Your teachers think of exciting ways to make your lessons interesting and are very good at reminding you to use your 'thinking skills' to help you make good progress.
- You enjoy the many school trips and visitors that help bring your learning to life!

All the adults work very hard together to make sure that you make good progress. They now want you all to make outstanding progress so we have asked them to:

- make sure you are all challenged to achieve your best, especially those of you who find your work quite easy
- help teaching assistants support you more during class discussions
- provide you all with regular opportunities to use your targets in class
- ensure that all adults keep detailed records of your behaviour so that they can see how well you behave over time
- improve planning for whole school improvement so they can measure how well new projects are helping you to learn.

You can help by making sure you attend school regularly and always try your best.

Yours sincerely

Susan Gadd
Her Majesty's Inspector

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