

Ruskin Junior School

Ruskin Avenue, Wellingborough, Northamptonshire NN8 3EG

Inspection dates

18–19 July 2018

Overall effectiveness	Requires improvement
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Requires improvement
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Requires improvement
Outcomes for pupils	Requires improvement
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Inadequate

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- Leaders' plans for improvement are not consistently precise enough. Measures for the impact of actions taken are not as focused as they could be.
- Communication with parents is not consistently effective. As a result, some parents are unaware of the work of the school.
- Leaders do not analyse behaviour records for patterns or trends systematically. Although the number of exclusions has dropped dramatically, the rate is still too high.
- Progress of boys in reading is inconsistent and as a result lags behind that of the girls overall.
- Teachers' expectations of pupils are not consistently high. When not sufficiently challenged, pupils become distracted and lose focus in their learning.
- Teachers do not consistently address pupils' misconceptions in spelling, grammar and punctuation. Consequently, pupils' progress in writing is not as rapid as it could be.
- Subject knowledge of some teachers and teaching assistants of punctuation, grammar and science is not secure enough to enable pupils to make consistently good progress.

The school has the following strengths

- Leaders have developed a reflective culture based on high expectations and rigorous monitoring of teaching and learning. Teachers and teaching assistants work collaboratively to meet the needs of pupils.
- Leaders make sure that robust systems are in place and pupils know how to keep themselves safe. Learning mentors effectively support the needs of vulnerable pupils, improving behaviour in the school.
- The school's curriculum is designed in a creative and engaging way. It allows pupils opportunities to understand the world around them.
- Current school information for the end of key stage 2 in reading, writing and mathematics showed significant improvements.

Full report

In accordance with section 13(4) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the school no longer requires special measures.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and governance by ensuring that:
 - plans for improvement are precisely focused and intended impact is clearly defined
 - communication with parents is developed further so as to improve the accuracy some have about the work of the school.
- Improve teaching and learning by ensuring that:
 - misconceptions of basic spelling, grammar and punctuation are consistently addressed
 - work set by teachers is consistently well matched to pupils' abilities so that all pupils are challenged, motivated and fully engaged with their learning
 - training is provided to improve the subject knowledge of some teachers and teaching assistants in the correct use of punctuation and grammar as well as in science.
- Ensure that leaders analyse behaviour records systematically in order to precisely target and eradicate exclusions.
- Increase the rate of progress of boys in reading so that it is in line with that of the girls.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The current principal arrived at Ruskin Junior School in September 2016, immediately after the school was judged to require special measures. Over the past two years, she has skilfully rebuilt the school by challenging and changing the culture within it.
- The principal has the respect of pupils, staff and other stakeholders, including most parents. Teachers and teaching assistants believe that because of the senior leadership team's broad and unwavering goals, 'the school is completely different'. Pupils and parents alike commented to inspectors of the positive changes and are proud of the school. 'A really good school and I'm proud my children go here.'
- Since the last inspection, the principal has successfully restructured the school's leadership team. Together, they have eradicated inadequate teaching. They have reversed the culture of low expectations of pupils' behaviour and as a result, standards are rising rapidly.
- Teachers and teaching assistants are encouraged to, and value opportunities to, share good practice. As a result, the school has empowered leaders, teachers and teaching assistants to take responsibility for improving the school.
- The director of teaching and learning implemented a monitoring system which is robust and effective. All leaders, including the advisory board, understand their role within the system. Teaching and learning is now regularly monitored, evaluated and reflected on to identify next steps for individual teachers and whole-school improvement. This has been exemplified in the school's ability to improve the rate of progress for all pupils over the past two years.
- Leaders ensure that the additional government funding from the pupil premium has been effectively used. Progress and attainment of the disadvantaged pupils are tracked and leaders target support according to individual needs. As a result, standards and attendance have improved for this group of pupils.
- The curriculum offered is broad and balanced. Work in pupils' books show that they benefit from a wide variety of creative and engaging topics which capture their interest, allowing them to learn about the world around them. The curriculum is extended through a number of special days and activities such multicultural days and visits from local faith leaders. Sports funding is used effectively to increase participation and pupils are improving their skills in a variety of sports.
- The leader for special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities is proactive in seeking and providing relevant training for staff to support them to meet the individual needs of pupils. The vast majority now make progress which is in line with that of their peers in reading, writing and mathematics. However, communication with parents about their child's needs is not always as effective as it could be. Some parents do not feel that they get enough information in a timely manner.
- Plans for school improvement have been broad as the school had several areas to improve. As a result, plans have resulted in some key improvements across the school. However, current plans are not focused enough. Identified measures of impact of leaders' actions are not suitably precise.

- The system the school has put in place to record and track incidents of poor behaviour does not allow leaders to systematically look for patterns or trends. As a result, this sometimes leads to a breakdown in communication between staff as well as with parents.

Governance of the school

- The Education Foundation Trust has not been supporting the school sufficiently well and their involvement with the school has decreased further since January this year. They have had no involvement in the school's own evaluation. The Education Foundation Trust has not fulfilled their statutory duties to support this school effectively.
- Members of the Academy Advisory Board are ambitious for the school. They are diligent in their assigned curriculum area responsibilities. The working relationship between teachers and the board is positive, which allows critical yet friendly visits to take place. Their involvement in school development has been successful in supporting improvements since the last inspection.
- The Lion Academy Trust has been providing support for the school since January 2018. This support is through a Department for Education funded project to improve leadership capacity and consistency in teaching. The trust has full confidence in the leadership skills of the principal and the director of teaching and learning.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective because the designated safeguarding leaders have ensured that all adults associated with the school receive thorough training in how to keep pupils safe. Staff understand their obligation to ensure that they report any safeguarding concerns, no matter how small they are. The school's safeguarding records show that staff at all levels report concerns to the designated leads, using the school's systems.
- Leaders have made sure that staff across the school are kept up to date with safeguarding information about pupils. Staff work together to monitor vulnerable pupils and ensure that concerns are recorded. For example, office staff alert the safeguarding leads when vulnerable pupils are absent.
- The designated safeguarding leaders have ensured that staff, parents and pupils know who they can talk to about a child at risk. Leaders are available for parents to share concerns that they may have. The school's records for safeguarding show that parents have passed concerns to the designated safeguarding leads.
- Designated safeguarding leaders have an accurate view of the needs of vulnerable families. Where concerns do not meet local authority thresholds for support, or cases have been stepped down from direct local authority involvement, staff at the school provide support for families, for example making referrals to the local food bank and working with local charities to provide school uniform.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment requires improvement.

- Teachers do not consistently use their knowledge of pupils' prior learning to plan effectively for all pupils to progress sufficiently well. Work in pupils' books and observations of lessons show that pupils are not consistently given work which matches their ability or their needs.
- Additionally, when teachers' expectations are too low and pupils are given work which they are already capable of, they become bored. During these lessons, some off-task behaviours were observed and learning was disrupted.
- Misconceptions in spelling, grammar and punctuation are not consistently addressed by teachers, slowing pupils' progress in writing. Work in pupils' books shows that while the content of most pupils' writing is improving steadily, spelling, grammar and punctuation is slower to improve.
- Gaps in the subject knowledge of some teachers and teaching assistants regarding punctuation and grammar also hinder pupils' progress. Concepts are not consistently explained, effectively resulting in some misconceptions becoming embedded.
- Teachers encourage pupils to think scientifically. They use investigations creatively to deepen pupils' knowledge and understanding of scientific concepts. However, there are some gaps in some teachers' and teaching assistants' subject knowledge and therefore progress in science is slower than in other subjects.
- When questioning is used effectively in lessons and pupils are encouraged to explain their thinking, this results in pupils' deeper understanding of key concepts and skills. However, this is not consistently achieved across the school.
- In most classes, teaching assistants are used well to support pupils' learning. When this happens, pupils are engaged with their learning and progress is more rapid.
- Teachers plan together within the year groups. As a result, each pupil in the year group, regardless of the class they are in, is provided with the same curriculum content.
- The standard of reading has improved significantly over the past year. The school now has a consistent approach to the teaching of reading and lessons are structured effectively, allowing pupils to develop skills at a more rapid pace. A positive culture and attitude has been created in the school to help improve pupils' enjoyment of reading. Each class is named after a different author and classrooms have dedicated reading spaces. Pupils say that they enjoy visiting the school library.
- The school has improved the quality of pupils' handwriting and the general presentation of their work. Books are neatly presented which shows that the pupils are now taking more pride in their work. They are keen to show their books to visitors and to discuss their learning.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Requires improvement

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare requires improvement.
- In some lessons, engagement of pupils in their learning is not always as high as it

could be. This occurs when tasks are not well matched to pupils' abilities. When this happens, not all pupils participate in the learning intended and they become disengaged and their progress is slowed.

- Pupils are taught about how to keep themselves safe in and outside of school and online. Pupils spoken to say that they now feel safe at school and enjoy coming to school. 'I used to dread coming to school. I don't anymore. It's fun!'
- The school's family support worker and team of skilled learning mentors, effectively support pupils who require additional support with their social and emotional education. For example, by supporting pupils through a bereavement or with anger management. Case studies provided during the inspection demonstrated the positive impact of the support provided on pupils' behaviour and well-being.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement.
- Records for monitoring sanctions resulting from pupils' poor behaviour is not as robust as it should be. Teachers, teaching assistants and lunchtime supervisors usually deal with incidents of poor behaviour well and consequences are routinely put in place according to the school's behaviour policy. However, these are not systematically recorded and monitored by leaders.
- The number of fixed-term and permanent exclusions currently remains well above the national average. However, the school has worked hard to change the culture of poor behaviour in school and in doing so has reduced the number of exclusions by 80% since the previous inspection. The school now works hard to keep pupils in school and supports those who struggle to self-regulate their behaviour.
- Behaviour has improved significantly since the previous inspection and now the majority of pupils generally conduct themselves well at different times of the school day. However, there is a small group of pupils who at times are unkind and rude to their peers during lessons and at lunchtimes. Adults generally deal well with incidents quickly and in a fair manner.
- Pupils enjoy going to school and are attending more regularly. The school has raised the profile of attendance and as a result, attendance is improving for all groups of pupils, including those who are disadvantaged and those who have SEN and/or disabilities. However, leaders have not convinced a small group of parents and their children of the importance of regular school attendance.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- Outcomes require improvement because there is variation between classes in the rate of progress pupils make across the school. While in some classes pupils are making rapid progress, in others it is slower. This is evident in pupil's books, learning in lessons and is reflected in the school's own progress information.
- School information shows that boys currently make less progress than girls in reading. Consequently, boys' attainment in reading is much lower than that of the girls in school.

- The most able pupils, while attaining well, could make even stronger progress and attain at an even higher level. Tasks are not always well matched to their abilities. As a result, some of the most able pupils waste time on work which is too easy before being moved on to more challenging tasks.
- Historical published data shows that pupils' attainment in spelling, grammar and punctuation and in science for the past three years has been well below the national average. The school's assessments of current pupils show that this has not improved.
- However, since the previous inspection, outcomes for pupils in reading, writing and mathematics have improved significantly. As a result, outcomes are no longer inadequate.
- Historical published data shows that attainment for pupils in reading, spelling, grammar and punctuation and mathematics placed the school in the bottom 10% of schools nationally. Current school information and work in books show that attainment for pupils in Year 6 is now in line with the national average for 2017 in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Pupils who did not pass the Year 2 phonics rescreen are now making stronger progress in their reading and writing. This is a result of the training provided for adults who lead the school's phonics support for this group of pupils. Half of this group of pupils are now attaining at the level which is expected for their age in reading and writing.
- The number of disadvantaged pupils in the school is nearly double the national average. School information about their performance shows that the vast majority of disadvantaged pupils are now making similar progress to that of other pupils nationally. This reflects the effective use of the pupil premium to support their learning.
- School information about the performance of pupils in the school who have SEN and/or disabilities in the school shows that the vast majority of them are now making similar progress to that of their peers in school. This reflects the effective use of the extra funding procured by the school to support their learning.

School details

Unique reference number	138886
Local authority	Northamptonshire
Inspection number	10053321

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

Type of school	Junior
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	7 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	277
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair	Rachael Mallows
Principal	Angela Watts
Telephone number	01933 381600
Website	http://ruskinacademy.education
Email address	angelawatts@ruskinjunior.net
Date of previous inspection	12–13 July 2016

Information about this school

- The school is an average-sized junior school.
- Since the previous inspection, the school has received formal support from The Education Foundation Trust and The Lion Academy Trust.
- The school is in the process of being rebrokered from The Education Foundation Trust to the Lion Academy Trust.
- Since the previous inspection there has been considerable changes in teaching staff and the leadership team including the principal and director of teaching and learning and the leader responsible for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities.
- The proportion of pupils who are supported by pupil premium funding is nearly double the national average.
- The proportion of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is in line with the national average.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed learning in 11 lessons across all classes and a learning walk across the school was completed jointly with the principal. Work in pupils' books covering a range of subjects, abilities and year groups was looked at together.
- Inspectors met with the principal and with leaders responsible for teaching and learning, SEN and/or disabilities and English and mathematics. The inspector also met with the family support worker, learning mentors, a newly qualified teacher and some higher-level teaching assistants.
- Inspectors met with members of The Education Foundation Trust and the Lion Academy Trust as well as members of the Academy Advisory Board.
- Inspectors met with groups of pupils formally to consider their views of their school. They also spoke informally with pupils during lessons and during break and lunchtimes.
- Inspectors considered the 30 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, written comments and letters from parents and spoke informally with 17 parents at the start of the school day. They also considered the school's own questionnaires, which reflected the views of 185 parents.
- Inspectors looked at a range of documentation, including the leaders' self-assessment of the school's performance, the school improvement plan, Academy Advisory Board minutes and notes of visits, the school's most recent information on pupils' progress and achievement and information related to safeguarding, behaviour and attendance.

Inspection team

Heidi Malliff, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Helen Williams	Her Majesty's Inspector
Emma Hollis-Brown	Ofsted Inspector

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