

Ramnoth Junior School

Ramnoth Road, Wisbech, Cambridgeshire PE13 2JB

Inspection dates

26–27 March 2019

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an inadequate school

- Leaders, governors and the trust have been too slow to take effective action to stem a decline in standards since the previous inspection.
- The local governing body has recently been disbanded owing to significant weaknesses in governance.
- Leadership in several areas across the school is poor. Most leaders are unclear about the extent and impact of their role. Leaders have an over-generous view of the quality of education provided.
- The school's curriculum is too narrow. Pupils do not access a breadth and depth of knowledge and skills in different subjects. Sequences of lessons in writing do not promote pupils' progress well enough. Pupils' opportunities to apply their writing skills in other subjects are limited.
- Teachers' weak use of assessment undermines the quality of teaching and learning. Teachers do not have an accurate picture of where there are gaps in pupils' learning, and pupils are not well supported to catch up.
- Too few pupils work at or above the standard expected for their age group in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Pupils' mathematical progress is weak. They do not regularly have opportunities to develop their reasoning and problem-solving knowledge and skills.
- Leaders do not ensure that additional funds for disadvantaged pupils and pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are used effectively. The academic outcomes for these groups of pupils are weak.
- A significant number of staff feel their contribution to school improvement is not heard. Consequently, morale among staff is low.
- Teaching does not consistently inspire and engage pupils. There is low-level disruption when teachers do not plan learning that interests pupils or is well suited to pupils' needs.
- Leaders do not ensure that the physical education (PE) and sport premium funds are spent effectively.

The school has the following strengths

- Recently, the trust's actions and intervention have started to secure improvement in the school.
- Pupils are well cared for and say they feel safe.

Full report

In accordance with section 44(1) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires special measures because it is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Rapidly improve the effectiveness of leadership and management, by:
 - ensuring that the trust secures effective governance
 - clarifying all leadership roles and increasing leadership capacity to bring about sustained improvement in the quality of leadership, teaching, learning and assessment and subsequently, pupils' progress
 - providing staff with training and guidance to help them fulfil their roles effectively
 - developing accuracy between leaders and staff in the use of assessment so it is used effectively to inform high-quality teaching and learning
 - developing leaders' understanding, use and evaluation of additional funding so that pupils' progress improves, including the PE and sport premium, pupil premium and SEND funding
 - reviewing the curriculum so that it enables pupils to develop greater knowledge and to deepen their understanding across a wide range of subjects
 - making sure that all staff understand the trust's vision for improvement and their responsibilities for raising standards.
- Improve the quality of teaching, learning, assessment and achievement, by:
 - ensuring that all teachers have sufficiently high expectations of what pupils can and should be achieving
 - making sure that all teachers use assessment accurately and effectively to plan learning in reading, writing and mathematics that meets the needs of pupils
 - planning lessons that follow a sequence, most notably in writing, so that tasks build upon what pupils already know and can do
 - developing pupils' opportunities to practise their writing skills across curriculum subjects
 - ensuring that teaching enables pupils to develop and rehearse their reasoning and problem-solving knowledge in mathematics
 - making sure that pupils leave with sufficiently developed knowledge and skills in reading, writing and mathematics to make a good start at secondary school.
- Improve pupils' behaviour for learning so that:
 - low-level disruption is eliminated

- pupils feel confident to tell teachers when they feel capable of achieving more.

The school may appoint newly qualified teachers.

An external review of the school's use of the pupil premium funding should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Inadequate

- Leaders and the trust have been too slow, for too long, to take action to halt the decline in standards. Although this has been compounded by the school's growth, including a new build, changes of staff, difficulties in recruitment and a reliance on temporary staff arrangements, the current quality of leadership and management is fragile and somewhat fragmented. Consequently, leaders lack the capacity to be able to make necessary and sustainable improvements.
- The school's strategic leadership structure is unclear. Leaders are not certain about their roles and, subsequently, do not understand how their work contributes to raising standards throughout the school. Crucially, this hinders them from taking effective, rigorous action to improve outcomes with the urgency that is required.
- While the trust, the federation improvement executive principal (FIEP), and one of the vice-principals have an accurate understanding of the quality of provision, other leaders' evaluations of the school's overall effectiveness and the quality of leadership, teaching, learning and assessment are over-generous.
- Since the previous inspection, leaders have not taken sufficiently strong action to improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. Although more recently leaders are undertaking a range of monitoring activities, in too many cases, they set the bar too low. Monitoring shows generous feedback that is not linked to improving the quality of teaching and learning. As a result, the quality of teaching is too variable, and pupils' outcomes from their various starting points have been poor over time.
- Leaders have failed to hold teachers appropriately to account for pupils' progress. Expectations of what pupils should achieve are frequently too low, and weak progress and performance too often go unchallenged. Leaders' checking has not been reviewed or sufficiently evaluated so that it successfully informs them about how to improve teachers' practice.
- Leaders do not take appropriate account of pupils' starting points to identify when pupils have not made the progress that they should. When analysing assessment information, leaders have not made sufficiently clear the links between a lack of progress and the quality of teaching.
- Despite the moderation of standards between teachers in Ramnoth and other trust schools, leaders have not done enough to ensure that teachers' assessments are accurate. Consequently, leaders do not have confidence in the accuracy of assessment information.
- The trust has recently taken decisive action, for example in disbanding the governing body and appointing the FIEP. New arrangements have increased the rigour and challenge of leadership, but these improvements are too little and too late.
- The pupil premium funding has not been used effectively in both promoting and in ensuring that disadvantaged pupils make good enough progress. Leaders' work has not resulted in improved progress. Too few disadvantaged pupils are working at the expectations for their age and making the progress they should from their starting

points.

- The use of funding for pupils with SEND is ineffective. Support is not carefully considered and thought through to ensure that it meets the needs of pupils with SEND. Although the school's approach in considering these pupils' personal, social, emotional and welfare needs is more evident, the weaknesses and inconsistencies in meeting their academic needs result in pupils with SEND not making the progress of which they are capable.
- The PE and sport premium is not being used well. Not all funding has been spent for its intended purpose. For example, it has been used to fund the school's swimming provision to which pupils have a basic entitlement outside the premium budget. Although this has now been recognised by the new leader, leaders are unclear what difference this additional funding makes.
- Leaders have not ensured that their curriculum accurately aligns with and meets the needs of their pupils. This results in pupils not developing a breadth and depth of knowledge and skills in all subject areas. Additionally, leaders have not ensured that the curriculum offers enough opportunities for pupils to apply their learned skills, such as writing, in other areas of the curriculum aside from English.
- Pupils are encouraged to develop their spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding through leaders' offer of 'curriculum enhancements'. For example, the school provides a variety of clubs for pupils to attend, visits to places and from people, and pupil participation in local events, such as providing publicity to support the funding of urgent repairs for the local church. During assemblies and whole-school events, pupils frequently consider features of British values, which are contributing successfully to them being prepared to become good citizens in modern Britain.
- Leaders have successfully submitted bids for the additional 'opportunity area' funding. This is helping teachers to develop their subject knowledge in mathematics, giving them access to training to improve teaching and learning particularly in writing, and has increased opportunities for staff to work with colleagues from other schools to share good practice. However, leaders have chosen not to apply for funding to support recruitment.
- The trust's communication with staff has been weak in the past. Staff morale is low. However, the leaders who are trying to now bring about improvements are facing adversity and barriers that are hindering progress in addressing the many weaknesses in the school. This is having a negative impact on both the pace of, and the capacity for, improvement.

Governance of the school

- Trustees and the local governing body have not acted swiftly enough to halt a significant decline in the quality of education and standards since the previous inspection.
- Inspection evidence confirms that, prior to being disbanded, governors' questioning lacked clarity and challenge and did not indicate that they were focusing on where standards needed to improve and subsequently were not holding leaders rigorously to account.

- Trustees recognised that governors had been ineffective in challenging and supporting leaders to improve standards. Consequently, trustees took definitive action and disbanded the local governing body recently.
- As a temporary arrangement, trustees are carrying out the governance role with the intention of establishing a new local governing body in September 2020.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. This aspect of the school's work is a strength of the school.
- Well-functioning and clear systems are in place for recording concerns and monitoring the progress of any referrals made to external agencies. Designated leaders assiduously follow through on the referrals they make and carefully monitor the impact of planned support.
- The designated leaders are aware of the safeguarding concerns that are most pertinent to the school's context. This enables leaders to respond appropriately and with the necessary knowledge and understanding needed that best meet and support pupils' needs.
- There is secure oversight of recruitment procedures. These are detailed and meet statutory requirements to ensure that all adults are suitable to work with children. Leaders' review of safeguarding training and practice is thorough, and they are quick to implement new guidance and identify any areas that could be further improved.
- Staff know how to raise concerns about pupils who may be at risk of harm. Inspectors spoke with members of different staff groups and all were very clear about the procedures. Leaders ensure that they update staff on policy and practice through team meetings and annual training. Furthermore, effective partnership working with parents and carers and external agencies helps to ensure that pupils are supported well and kept safe.
- Pupils who spoke with inspectors said that they feel safe at Ramnoth. They were able to talk knowledgeably and with an awareness of potential local risks with, for example, 'knives' and 'picking up dirty needles'. Pupils showed a secure understanding of what to do to keep themselves safe in all situations, including when online.
- All parents who responded to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, and those with whom inspectors spoke during the inspection, agreed that their children are safe.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Inadequate

- A lack of direction, rigour and challenge from leaders has resulted in weak teaching, learning and assessment. This has been compounded by staffing changes. Where new staff, some of them temporary, are in place, they have not been able to swiftly remedy previous gaps in pupils' learning. The quality of teaching is too variable throughout the school. Therefore, too many pupils leave Ramnoth poorly prepared for the next stage of their education.
- Teachers throughout the school do not have a clear understanding of what pupils

should know and understand by the end of their primary education. Current assessments and pupils' work show that teachers' assessment is very inconsistent and that leaders lack confidence in its accuracy.

- Teachers do not check whether the content they have taught has been properly learned. Day-to-day practice in assessment does not assist teachers in identifying gaps pupils have in their learning. For example, some exemplar material in writing, which is intended to assist teachers in making accurate judgements, is assessed over-generously. This results in inaccurate assessments of pupils' progress in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Expectations of what pupils can achieve are frequently too low. Teachers do not, as a matter of routine, plan learning that interests and challenges pupils. In many instances, there is low-level disruption because pupils lose interest in their learning. As a result, pupils do not make sufficient progress.
- The deployment of other adults working with pupils with SEND, disadvantaged pupils and those pupils who speak English as an additional language varies widely throughout the school. This is because the support is not well enough considered and monitored to ensure that it is making a difference to the progress pupils make. There is little oversight of what teaching assistants are doing when they are working with individual pupils or smaller groups. Consequently, the achievement of pupils with SEND and those who are disadvantaged is not good enough.
- The most able pupils do not consistently have work that challenges their thinking to help them to deepen their understanding. The failure to identify their higher starting points means that learning activities are routinely set too low for these pupils to make the progress of which they are capable.
- New approaches to improve the teaching of writing have supported pupils in understanding the structures of different types of writing and using more complex vocabulary. However, too many pupils do not confidently use a range of grammatical structures and punctuation, and this restricts their writing.
- In mathematics, opportunities for deeper thinking and the application of problem-solving and reasoning skills are limited. This slows the progress of pupils in every class. Following training, teachers are improving their own subject knowledge. There is evidence in pupils' work that number and calculation skills are taught frequently throughout the school.
- The intense focus on English and mathematics limits teaching and learning in other subjects. The curriculum does not take sufficient account of subjects such as science, history and geography to ensure that pupils' skills, knowledge and understanding are developed. Teachers do not ensure that pupils have well-thought-out and routine opportunities to practise their writing skills across this curriculum.
- Pupils enjoy the new approach to reading using the school's chosen scheme. There has been an increase in the focus on reading, particularly linked to comprehension and being able to explain techniques authors use when writing, using pupils' learned deduction and inference skills. Pupils are encouraged to read and evaluate high-quality texts in different genres that employ complex and varied language. For example, in a Year 5 class, pupils were showing increasing proficiency while annotating and identifying features of the poem 'My Shadow' by Robert Louis Stevenson.

- Scrutiny of pupils' work confirms that although there are examples of stronger practice in teaching, learning and assessment, this does not reflect the typical experience for pupils throughout the school over time.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Requires improvement

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Work to ensure pupils' social and emotional well-being is effective. While this has been further strengthened by the introduction of the family support team, this success is also because staff develop positive relationships with families and the pupils and consequently get to know them very well. This helps pupils feel safe, secure and comfortable in their school environment.
- Typically, pupils have good relationships with each other and work well together in lessons. They show respect for adults and comply with instructions and guidance given.
- Pupils take pride in their work and are keen to achieve well. Pupils work hard and are eager to talk about and share their work.
- All staff care about the pupils. They safeguard them effectively and support pupils' personal, social and emotional needs well. Pupils say that teachers 'are kind', and 'they care about us' and if pupils are worried, they think that all adults are approachable and will listen to their worries and concerns.
- Pupils are very clear about treating everyone with respect, regardless of race, ethnicity and need. Pupils show empathy for those pupils they perceive to need more help: one pupil said, 'We are all kind and help one another.'

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement.
- Pupils' behaviour and attitudes to learning are positive when activities are well planned to meet their needs. Where pupils are not engaged by the teaching, there is low-level disruption. This has a negative effect on pupils' progress.
- Pupils are not confident to explain to teachers that they are able to complete work easily. Instead, they are usually compliant, listen patiently and follow the guidance given without question. This means that pupils are not considering how they could do better. Neither do they capitalise on their evident eagerness to make sure they achieve their best.
- Pupils generally behave well around the school. They appear to enjoy spending time with each other at break- and lunchtimes.
- A small proportion of parents think that bullying is not dealt with effectively. Inspection evidence, including parents' responses on Parent View and to a questionnaire in December 2018, shows a more positive view of behaviour. There are rigorous systems in place to monitor behaviour and any incidents are investigated and appropriate actions taken. Inspection evidence of pupils' behaviour did not find any causes for

concern.

- Pupils told inspectors that they think behaviour at the school has improved over time. Pupils insightfully explained that they think the introduction of the 'sensory circuits' helps to calm pupils and 'gets them ready to learn in class'.
- An improved rigour in the monitoring of attendance is contributing towards pupils attending school more regularly. As well as a family support team being established in response to attendance concerns, the school's chosen 'tracker' is used to closely check individual pupils and trigger appropriate conversations and support with families. As a result, attendance is now improving. Likewise, persistent non-attendance is reducing, particularly for specific groups of pupils, including pupils with SEND and disadvantaged pupils.

Outcomes for pupils

Inadequate

- In 2018, Year 6 pupils made weak progress in mathematics and very weak progress in reading and writing. The proportion of pupils who met the expected standard in all three subjects was in the bottom 20% of primary schools nationally. In 2018, less than half the pupils in Year 6 left the school with the skills and knowledge required to achieve well in secondary school in reading, writing and mathematics combined.
- Current pupils' underachievement is widespread throughout the school. Pupils make weak gains in their learning over time. The current quality of teaching, learning and assessment is not enabling pupils to catch up quickly enough in all year groups.
- The school's own information about the progress pupils are making in reading, writing and mathematics is unreliable. According to the school's own information, the attainment of current pupils is improving. However, the work in pupils' books shows that pupils are not making the progress required to catch up, as gaps in learning are not being identified and filled effectively enough.
- Disadvantaged pupils achieve standards that are below those of other pupils nationally. They are not making sufficient progress due to the lack of effective provision and appropriate tasks to meet their individual needs.
- Pupils with SEND typically make weak progress from their starting points. Learning activities and additional support are not carefully planned to meet pupils' individual needs. This has limited their progress over time.
- Pupils who speak English as an additional language are supported to access all aspects of the curriculum. Teaching assistants use their bilingual skills effectively to communicate with pupils. However, teachers' deployment of support staff to ensure that pupils who speak English as an additional language make effective progress, as with other groups of pupils, is often not well enough considered and, as a result, the progress these pupils make is too variable.
- Pupils' current work shows that the most able pupils do not make good enough progress. This is because these pupils have not been taught the skills and knowledge needed to deepen their learning.
- There is very little assessment information for pupils' achievement in subjects other than English and mathematics. The recorded curriculum work in pupils' books is

limited. This means that teachers and leaders are not able to accurately report on how well pupils achieve in the wider curriculum subjects.

School details

Unique reference number	140173
Local authority	Cambridgeshire
Inspection number	10046467

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	249
Interim appropriate authority	The board of trustees
Executive Principal	Karen Crawley
Telephone number	01945 583690
Website	www.neneandramnothschool.co.uk
Email address	office@nenerjs.org
Date of previous inspection	17–18 June 2015

Information about this school

- Ramnoth Junior School is an average-sized primary school. However, the school is currently expanding in numbers. It is in the process of moving from being a two-form entry to a three-form entry school. At the present time, there are three classes in Year 3 and two classes in Years 4, 5 and 6.
- The trustees are responsible for the quality of education provided by the school. The trust normally delegates the day-to-day running of the school to the local governing body. However, in February 2019, the local governing body was disbanded, and trustees are temporarily taking on this role.
- The school became an academy on 1 October 2013. It is sponsored by the Elliot Foundation Academy Trust. The academy is part of a federation with Nene Infant School, which became an academy on the same date.
- Ramnoth Junior School and Nene Infant School share the same school site and are led by the executive principal and the same leadership team across both schools. They are inspected as two separate schools.
- Since the previous inspection, there have been several changes in staffing. Additionally,

there is an experienced headteacher from a fellow trust school, the FIEP, brokered by the trust to join the school part time for half of the week to provide support and challenge.

- The proportion of pupils with SEND is below the national average. A smaller proportion of pupils than the national average have education, health and care plans.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils is below the national average.
- The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is above the national average.

Information about this inspection

- Between them, inspectors visited all classes jointly with leaders. During visits to lessons, inspectors looked at pupils' books, spoke with pupils and looked at their current work to find out how well they are learning.
- Alongside leaders, inspectors scrutinised pupils' books across a range of subjects to evaluate pupils' learning in English, mathematics and across the wider curriculum. Inspectors talked to pupils about their reading and heard pupils read in their reading lessons.
- Inspectors talked to groups of pupils about their experiences of school life and their learning to find out what it is like to be a pupil at Ramnoth Junior School. Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and during break- and lunchtime.
- Discussions were held with the executive principal, the three vice-principals, the associate leader who is also the assessment leader, and the special educational needs coordinator (SENCo). The lead inspector also met with representatives from the trust, including the chief executive officer, and worked closely throughout the inspection with the trust's regional director. Other inspectors met the leaders for English and mathematics.
- The lead inspector also held a telephone conversation with Cambridgeshire's service director of education.
- Inspectors considered the 24 responses to the Ofsted online questionnaire, Parent View, as well as the 18 free-text responses, and had conversations with parents at the start of school on the first day of the inspection.
- Inspectors took account of the 26 responses to Ofsted's online staff questionnaire. The lead inspector also arranged two formal meetings for staff on the second day of the inspection.
- There were no online responses from pupils. However, inspectors spent time talking with pupils throughout the two-day inspection.
- Inspectors scrutinised a wide range of documents, including those related to safeguarding, behaviour, attendance, exclusions, the school's evaluation of its own performance and the school's development plans.

Inspection team

Tracy Fielding, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Lynsey Holzer	Ofsted Inspector
Shân Oswald	Ofsted Inspector

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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. www.gov.uk/pupil-premium-information-for-schools-and-alternative-provision-settings.

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