

Ripley Junior School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	112611
Local Authority	Derbyshire
Inspection number	310946
Inspection dates	17–18 September 2008
Reporting inspector	Geof Timms

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 on roll	
School (total)	289
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Julie Critchlow
Headteacher	Mr Denis Hanbury
Date of previous school inspection	12 July 2004
School address	Poplar Avenue Ripley Derbyshire DE5 3PN
Telephone number	01773 742281
Fax number	01773 570190

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This is a larger than average junior school that serves a mixed catchment area in the town of Ripley. The proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals is below average. Very few pupils are from minority ethnic groups or have English as an additional language. The number of pupils who leave or join the school, at other than normal times, is low. Pupils' attainment on entry to the school is above average. A below average proportion has learning difficulties and/or disabilities, mainly moderate learning difficulties, although the school has a higher than average proportion of pupils with a statement of special educational need. The school has achieved a Derbyshire Anti-bullying award, an Activemark, an ECO school award and a Health Promoting School award.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This good school provides an effective education for pupils. It is outstanding in personal development and the curriculum. Although standards are consistently well above average, the school is not complacent and is continually looking for ways to improve its provision. Self-evaluation is accurate and the inspection findings support the school's own view of itself. Parents are largely very positive about the school. One wrote 'Both of my children have been very happy at Ripley Juniors, and I have been very pleased with their results.'

Pupils achieve well and make good progress. Standards in writing have improved recently after the staff introduced new ideas and teaching methods, and they are currently above average. By the end of Year 6, pupils are able to write creatively and have a good understanding of different genres. Standards in mathematics have been lower than in other subjects, but the school is aware of this and already has plans in place to raise standards further.

Pupils achieve well because the quality of teaching and learning is good and the school provides them with an outstanding curriculum. Through this, they have numerous opportunities to enrich and extend their learning. Teachers, and other adults in the school, have very strong relationships with pupils and this encourages them to take a full and active part in lessons. Those with learning difficulties, or who are at an early stage of learning English, are very well catered for with very strong support from teaching assistants. Teachers, however, do not always plan how they are going to assess the progress pupils have made in lessons.

Pupils' personal development and well-being are outstanding. Their attitudes towards school and each other are excellent. There are many examples of pupils' spontaneously supporting or helping others. They clearly enjoy school greatly and have an excellent understanding of how to keep themselves safe, including when using the internet, and they make an excellent contribution to the school and to the local and wider community. Pupils have a good awareness of how to live a healthy lifestyle. The democratic principles around which the school council and ECO committee work are outstanding. The schools' work on democracy has been used by the local council as a model of good practice. Attendance is well above average and the school works hard to encourage this.

The good and outstanding aspects of the school's work are due to good leadership and management. The headteacher leads the school well and the very positive ethos is a tribute to him and his style of leadership. A very effective and innovative senior team supports him. Between them they have a clear grasp of the improvement needed and how new ideas can raise standards still further. The tracking of pupils' progress is at an early stage, but is already highlighting more clearly where improvement is needed. Target setting has been insufficiently challenging in the past. The school self-evaluation is accurate and honest. The governing body provide good support and have a good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. There have been significant improvements since the last inspection and this indicates that the school has a good capacity to improve further.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards in mathematics throughout the school.
- Continue developing the tracking of pupils' progress and make more use of this to ensure target setting is sufficiently challenging.
- Ensure teachers' plans are clear about how they will identify the progress made in lessons.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Achievement builds well on the above average attainment on entry to the school. Progress in Years 3 and 4 has improved recently and good progress is now evident in reading, writing and science. The progress in mathematics has not been as consistently good as in the other subjects and the school is working hard to improve this. For example, after the 2007 national tests, staff analysed pupils' answers and discovered a weakness in work on shape and space. Improvements in teaching and planning were successful in raising standards. Work to raise standards in writing has had a positive impact and current standards in pupils' books are above average. There are no significant differences in the achievement of boys or girls and those with learning difficulties make very good progress, especially when they have the support of teaching assistants. A number of new initiatives are yet to have a full impact on standards, but progress is more even in all year groups than it has been in the past. Standards in art and design are often above those expected.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

The school places great importance on the personal development of pupils and works hard to ensure that they all feel valued. As a result, pupils have excellent attitudes towards school and talk enthusiastically about how much they enjoy being there. Moral and social development is exceptionally well supported through a range of activities, which encourage pupils to help and care for one another. Pupils respond well to initiatives that enable them to socialise and work across year groups. The impact can be seen in the way pupils respect and care for each other and the exemplary behaviour throughout the school. As well as making positive contributions to their local community, pupils raise funds for projects in different parts of the world. They have an excellent knowledge about a range of faiths and cultures in religious education and the wider curriculum. A wide range of extra curricular sporting activities contributes to pupils' good understanding of a healthy lifestyle. The school council provides pupils with a voice and decisions have had an impact on school life, for example, in the purchase of playground equipment. By the end of Year 6, pupils are acquiring good basic skills and qualities that will equip them for the future.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The best teaching is characterised by excellent relationships between staff and pupils, which results in a productive and positive learning ethos. Pupils are keen to take part in these lessons, which are well planned and resourced. Tasks are appropriate for the purpose of the lessons and pupils have excellent opportunities to discuss their ideas with each other. Teachers are at an early stage of using information about how well pupils are learning and do not always plan how they are going to assess pupils' progress in lessons. The teaching assistants offer excellent support, especially for the lower attaining pupils. Their expertise is also used well in supporting the art and design, French and personal and social development curriculum. Teachers have introduced recent changes to the curriculum very effectively and pupils talk about how much

they enjoy lessons. One explained how in one good lesson they had learned 'a new way of doing maths.'

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

A number of strong aspects lead to a high quality curriculum. There are significant strengths, for example, in the school's programme for personal, social and health education, which result in excellent pupil cooperation and working relationships. The curriculum is planned well with an increasing focus on how individual pupils, as well as groups of pupils, will learn effectively. Curriculum planning is increasingly focused on providing additional challenge for gifted or talented pupils. The improved, and consistent, application of information and communication technology across the whole range of subjects, and its use by both teachers and pupils, is helping to make learning interesting and relevant. Good progress has been made in implementing the new national strategies for literacy and numeracy. The school is well on track to ensure all pupils have access to a modern foreign language. There is an excellent range of extra-curricular opportunities, which attract pupils' regular interest and attendance. The curriculum is regularly monitored and reviewed, and because of this, underpins the pupils' learning very effectively.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The school provides a secure and safe environment, which is valued by pupils and parents. Bullying is rare and pupils talk about how much they trust their teachers and each other to sort out any problems quickly and effectively. Learning needs are identified early and addressed promptly. Links with the feeder infant schools and outside agencies support this process well. Individual education plans for more able pupils and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are sharply focused and reviewed regularly to ensure needs are being met. As a result, these pupils achieve well and respond to high expectations. Targets for improvement have recently been put in place to help pupils move forward with their learning, but the impact upon overall achievement has not yet been seen. Health and safety checks and risk assessments are robust and regularly reviewed. All the checks required to secure the safeguarding of pupils have been robustly carried out.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The school has an effective leadership team. Those involved, including the headteacher, have a clear grasp on the school's strengths and weaknesses, and the important priorities for improvement. They are well supported by all staff who demonstrate a willingness to try new ideas and look at their practice with a view to raising standards. Target setting is developing, but is not yet fully effective in providing sufficient challenge. The governing body hold the school to account well and have a good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses. Subject leaders have good systems for monitoring the teaching and learning, and for then spreading good practice throughout the school. The school does a great deal of work to promote community cohesion, although this is not yet done in a planned or systematic way.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well being?	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress	2

¹Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average to below average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Personal development and well-being

How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	1
The behaviour of learners	1
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	2
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Annex B

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

19 September 2008

Dear Children

Inspection of Ripley Junior School, Poplar Avenue, Ripley, DE5 3PN

I am writing to thank you for the way you made us welcome when we visited your school recently. We really enjoyed visiting you. We also enjoyed hearing about the things you told us that you like about the school. I particularly liked the rhymes Year 4 wrote as part of the road safety project.

We agree with you and most of your parents that Ripley Junior is a good school. All of the adults in the school are working very hard to provide you with a good education. There are many extra exciting things to do, both in and out of lessons, such as clubs, trips out or interesting visitors. Most of you work very hard in your lessons and your behaviour is excellent. This helps your teachers to help you to learn new things. We were especially impressed with the way the older pupils look after the younger children.

Your headteacher leads the school well and the teachers have many good ideas about how they can make the school even better. To help with this, we have asked the teachers to help you get even better at mathematics, to set targets that really challenge you to learn new things, and to work out how well you have learned in the lessons.

Thank you again for your help. Enjoy your time at Ripley and keep working hard!

Yours sincerely

Geof Timms

Lead inspector