

Ridgefield Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	133311
Local Authority	Cambridgeshire
Inspection number	316073
Inspection dates	14–15 May 2008
Reporting inspector	John Messer

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	219
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Michael Priestly
Headteacher	Mr Raymond Doe
Date of previous school inspection	24 November 2003
School address	Radegund Road Cambridge CB1 3RJ
Telephone number	01223 712418
Fax number	01223 712422

Age group	3–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This school is smaller than average. There are seven classes plus a part-time Nursery and a part-time language unit for children in the Foundation Stage. Just over half of pupils are from White British backgrounds and a high proportion are from minority ethnic groups. A quarter of pupils speak English as an additional language and seventeen other languages are spoken. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities is average. The proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals is above average. The attainment of pupils on entry to the school is well below average. The school is due to become a Trust School in September when links with the federation of two local secondary schools will be formalised.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a good school where there is a vigour and vibrancy about the climate for learning. Teaching is good and some is outstanding. Staff share a commitment to promoting success for all pupils. Pupils are happy, keen to learn and eager to succeed. They achieve well and make good progress. Their good personal development supports their learning well. Pupils come from an exceptionally diverse range of backgrounds yet all quickly become part of the school family. The school has been highly effective in meeting its aim of being a caring, sharing community where everyone is valued and respected. Provision for pupils who speak languages other than English at home is exceptionally good. Children receive a warm welcome when they start in the Nursery, where provision is outstanding. Many newcomers speak little or no English but support is so good that they rapidly become fluent and make at least as much progress in literacy and numeracy as all the others.

Pupils make good progress in Years 1 to 6. Standards are a little below national averages in reading, writing and mathematics. They have done well to attain these standards because their learning has been affected by several factors. Staff absence has interrupted learning in some classes. A high proportion of pupils are recent arrivals and have not yet had enough time to catch up with the others. Many have to master English speaking skills before they can gain maximum benefit from the good teaching. In some year groups there is a high proportion of pupils who find learning difficult and, although they make good progress, they do not always attain average standards. There is now a groundswell of consistently good teaching and learning, which is causing standards to rise. The school has been concentrating hard on raising standards in literacy and numeracy. Science has not been subject to such intensive attention, resulting in standards that are well below average, and weaknesses in assessment. Pupils are adept at using computers and produce some particularly good work.

There is some highly imaginative teaching that fires pupils' imaginations. Technology, such as computers and interactive whiteboards, is being used increasingly well to support learning. The use of technology to make short films is starting to become a feature of the good curriculum. Links are being made between subjects to make learning more interesting.

Pastoral care is a strong feature. Relationships between staff and pupils are excellent. Personal guidance, such as advice on leading healthy lifestyles, is good. Academic guidance is effective. Teachers give pupils a clear understanding of what to do to reach the next stages in their learning. Staff are very caring but there are times when pupils are too reliant on adult support and are not sufficiently encouraged to think creatively, use their initiative and become more independent. Procedures for safeguarding children are fully in place. Pupils are self-assured and develop a wide range of skills that gives them a secure platform for moving on to the secondary school. Nearly all parents are delighted with the education provided for their children, One comment was typical, 'A wonderful school where all teachers work so hard and are so approachable'.

Leadership at all levels is good. The headteacher has gathered around him a team of staff who are passionate about developing an exciting learning environment. Some subject leaders have been appointed recently and have not yet had their full impact on raising standards but the school is poised to make further advances. Management is good and the school runs smoothly. The school's self-evaluation is accurate and identifies clearly appropriate areas for improvement. Good links have been forged with the two schools in the secondary school federation and the

school has benefited from much specialist input from secondary school teachers. The governing body is effective and governors have worked closely with the headteacher to pilot the school towards becoming a Trust School in September when it too is due to join the federation.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children's skills are lower than those typically found when they enter the Nursery, particularly in communication, language and literacy. There is strong emphasis on developing children's self-confidence and independence. Children enjoy their learning. The development of language skills and extending vocabulary is a high priority. Provision in the Reception class is good and the newly appointed teacher is establishing good relationships with children. Nursery provision is outstanding because the emphasis on children learning through first hand experiences is highly successful. For example, children observed the life cycle of caterpillars and were moved when their butterflies were set free to fly off into the grounds. Adults often communicate with children in their home language and this supports learning exceptionally well. Staff look after children with the utmost care and attention. Children achieve well and by the end of the Reception year, many are at the level expected for their age although mathematical development is below expected levels. Excellent links are established with parents through home visits prior to children starting school. Parents are welcomed warmly into school and encouraged to contribute to their children's learning.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards and improve assessment procedures in science.
- Link new initiatives in order to develop a more consistent curriculum that is geared to stimulating pupils' creativity.
- Provide more opportunities for pupils to think creatively, use their initiative, and become independent learners.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils' achievement is good. Most make good progress and many make exceptionally rapid progress, often from very low starting points. Pupils with disabilities and those who find learning difficult are supported effectively and they achieve well. Pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds and those who speak English as an additional language often make exceptionally good progress and attain standards that are at least in line with national averages. Despite their good progress, standards are still below average in reading, writing and mathematics by Year 2. By Year 6 standards are close to national averages in English and mathematics. In these subjects the results of national tests for pupils in Year 6 in 2007 were much better than the previous year. Standards in science are well below average but again test results were better in 2007 than 2006. There are clear signs that standards are rising.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils enjoy school and grow in self-confidence. One highly effective strategy in promoting self-esteem is 'Marvellous Me' where the class work together for a short time each day to celebrate the lives of two of their classmates. Pupils are reflective, friendly and courteous, although there are too few opportunities for them to use their initiative and become independent

learners. Pupils and adults respect each other and this supports learning well. Despite the school's best efforts, attendance remains below average. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. There are many opportunities for pupils to develop their appreciation of different cultures because teachers grasp opportunities to celebrate the great diversity of pupils' backgrounds. Pupils develop a growing awareness of citizenship. For example, elections to the school council are contested enthusiastically, with candidates preparing a manifesto and all pupils voting. Pupils have a good understanding of how to lead healthy lifestyles, stay safe and look after themselves.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching is especially good where teachers maintain high expectations of pupils and present them with stimulating challenges. In a mathematics lesson for pupils in Year 6, for example, pupils were bursting with enthusiasm as they attempted to solve problems using network theory devised by the eighteenth century mathematician Euler. In Year 4, pupils thoroughly enjoyed making a short film to introduce Watership Down. Such imaginative teaching is not yet common practice throughout the school. Teaching is less effective where expectations are too low and there is insufficient challenge for more able pupils.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

A particularly strong emphasis is placed on developing pupils' skills in language, literacy and numeracy as well as personal development. This emphasis has provided pupils with a secure basis for moving on with their learning and for branching out into more creative areas. Information and communication technology (ICT) is developing as a particular strength of the school, although the use of technology to underpin the curriculum is much stronger in some year groups than in others. The curriculum is relevant to pupils' needs and helps to prepare them well for the next phase in their education. There is a good range of after school clubs, visits and visitors that enrich learning well.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Pupils feel valued, happy and safe because the school provides a very caring and supportive environment. One parent said, 'I feel the school has a lovely, family environment'. Pupils who find learning difficult are supported well by highly skilled teaching assistants. The language unit is outstanding because staff have created an environment that is rich in opportunities for developing speech. Provision for pupils with English as an additional language is exceptionally good, with pupils encouraged to celebrate their home language. Procedures for tracking pupils' progress in English and mathematics are well established, ensuring that teachers know pupils' capabilities and how to move their learning forward. Assessment of progress in science is not so well developed and is an area that the school has identified as requiring improvement.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Subject leaders are enthusiastic. They are ambitious for the school and are striving to help pupils to attain the highest possible standards. Many are new and have not yet had time to monitor provision in order to identify precisely where improvements are needed. Improvement since the last inspection has been good. There is a unity of purpose which demonstrates that there is good potential for further improvement. The school gains considerably from its close association with partner secondary schools. Plans to formalise these links are advanced and the school is set to join the federation so that resources and expertise can be shared more fully.

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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 effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	3
The behaviour of learners	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2
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 the learners' needs?	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2

¹ Grade 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.

Annex A

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	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	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

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

16 May 2008

Dear Children

Inspection of Ridgefield Primary School, Cambridge, CB1 3RJ

What a lovely school! I thoroughly enjoyed the short time I spent with you. Thank you for being so friendly and helpful.

Your school is a good school. One of the best things is the fact that you come from so many different backgrounds, different countries and speak different languages yet you all get on so well together. The school is a really happy place. Teachers, support staff and you, yourselves, all contribute to this feeling of happiness that makes the school feel like one big happy family. You told me that you like the fact that the school is not too large because it helps you to know everybody and make close friends. Children get a fantastic start in the Nursery because there are so many intriguing things to do. Many of you arrive at school without knowing much English but you settle in quickly and soon speak English really well. You make good progress in literacy, numeracy and ICT. I loved watching the film that Year 4 made about 'Jack and the Beanstalk'. Progress in science could be better. Your behaviour is good and you like learning new things. You work willingly but also enjoy having fun. Those of you who find it a little difficult to learn new things get lots of help and do really well. You are good at sport and keep yourselves fit by having plenty of exercise. You know how to stay safe and look after yourselves and others. You told me that one of the best things about the school was the teachers and the way that they make learning fun. Your parents also appreciate all that the teachers and support staff do to help you. You also get quite a bit of help from the secondary schools and this is due to increase even more. All the adults are keen to improve the school further.

I think that there are several things that would make the school even better. You need to be helped to make better progress and attain higher standards in science. I think that all the new ideas that are being brought in to make learning exciting should be linked together to help you produce top quality work. I think that you could be more independent and use your own ideas a lot more in making decisions about how you learn. I know that you want to do your best and I suggest that if you learn to use more initiative and do things for yourselves you could become even better learners.

I wish you every success in the future.

Yours sincerely,

John Messer

Lead inspector