

Ravensdale Junior School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	112760
Local Authority	City of Derby
Inspection number	325678
Inspection dates	15–16 October 2008
Reporting inspector	Susan Aldridge

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)	278
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Annette Wheway
Headteacher	Mrs Paula Martin
Date of previous school inspection	19 October 2005
School address	Devonshire Drive Mickleover Derby Derbyshire DE3 9EY
Telephone number	01332 512 373
Fax number	

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Ravensdale Junior is a larger than average school in a residential area of Derby. Most pupils are of White British heritage although the proportion from minority ethnic groups is higher than in most schools. A small proportion of pupils are learning to speak English; they are mainly Japanese and a few are Polish. Although the percentage of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities has risen since the previous inspection it remains below average. The percentage eligible for free school meals is below average. When pupils enter the school, mainly from the adjacent infant school, their attainment is at least average, most often above and occasionally well above average. The school has Health Promoting Schools Status and the Activemark award. Following the retirement of the headteacher, a new headteacher joined the school in September 2008.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 4

In accordance with Section 13(3) 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.

The overall effectiveness of Ravensdale Junior School is inadequate. Since the previous inspection, standards have not risen sufficiently and too many pupils underachieve, particularly the more able. The provisional results of the 2008 national tests show that standards are likely to be in line with the national average in mathematics and science and above the average in English. However, the results also reflect significant underachievement, because many of the pupils who took the tests did not make enough progress, given their above average levels on entry to the school. Inspection evidence shows that progress remains insufficient to enable pupils throughout the school to reach the standards of which they are capable, in reading, writing and mathematics. Underachievement is linked to inadequate teaching and learning, particularly assessment, and also to weaknesses in academic guidance and support. The lack of improvement since the previous inspection is the result chiefly of inadequate school self-evaluation.

The most telling weakness in teaching and learning lies in the planning of lessons. Assessment, which varies in its accuracy, is not taken into account well enough when teachers plan their lessons. As a result, pupils are set tasks that are not always well matched to their abilities. This is evident in lessons when pupils struggle to complete the work set or when they find the activities too easy. Several parents wrote of their concerns about more able pupils not being challenged sufficiently. Inspectors found examples of this, but they also noted occasions when pupils of middle and lower ability were given inappropriate work. The fundamental weaknesses in teaching have resulted in too many pupils in each year group making insufficient progress. However this has not been noticed because the school does not have a suitable system for checking pupils' rates of progress in each year group. This was identified as an area for improvement at the previous inspection, but the action taken by the school did not go far enough. Although a check is made on standards, not enough attention has been paid to the progress that pupils are making. This was summed up well by a parent who questioned whether 'children are extended as well as they might be as long as they are performing well'.

Pupils are welcoming, sociable and articulate. The school's happy atmosphere results from good relationships between all members of the school's community. The high degree of racial harmony is a testament to the school's success in encouraging community cohesion. Almost all pupils enjoy coming to school but fewer are enthusiastic about their lessons. They have a good understanding of healthy lifestyles, and make healthy choices at school. Links with community agencies are used well to encourage pupils' awareness of how to keep themselves safe and they behave sensibly and safely. The school council gives pupils a voice and so they have an influence on school life. Pupils contribute well to the school and local communities. However, the slow rate at which pupils develop their basic skills and their limited capacity to work independently mean that their personal development is satisfactory overall rather than good.

The new headteacher has made a positive start. As a parent noted, 'she seems to be a hit with children and parents alike with her forward thinking and positive approach to pupils' care and education.' She has swiftly diagnosed where the school's weaknesses lie and taken suitable

action to secure improvements. At this early stage, the impact of her actions is not yet evident. Staff are supportive and they are keen to improve. However, those with leadership responsibilities have not been sufficiently involved in self-evaluation in the past and so they lack the knowledge and skills to contribute fully. Similarly, most of the governors are either new to governance or new to their roles and so they are not yet in a position to carry out their roles effectively or take part in rigorous evaluation of the school's work. As a result of these weaknesses the school does not have the capacity to make the necessary improvements and leadership and management overall are inadequate.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards and increase the rate of pupils' progress throughout the school.
- Improve the quality of teaching and learning by making effective use of accurate assessment information to plan work that presents a suitable challenge for pupils of all abilities.
- Develop a robust system for monitoring and evaluating pupils' progress in order to identify underachievement and take appropriate action where progress is insufficient.
- Ensure governors and staff with leadership responsibilities are able to contribute effectively to self-evaluation and school improvement.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 4

Because key weaknesses identified at the time of the previous inspection have not been actioned well enough, standards have not risen sufficiently. Standards overall in the school are now broadly average, yet pupils enter the school with standards that are mostly above average. Whilst their underachievement is associated mainly with weaknesses in provision, it is also the case that the school's development plan in the last two years has had too little focus on accelerating pupils' progress and raising standards. Because the school's results compare well with schools locally and nationally, raising standards further and ensuring all pupils make at least satisfactory progress has not been seen as a priority. Statutory targets set to raise attainment have not been ambitious enough and even these were not always reached. Just over a third of the pupils who entered the school with a Level 3 in English or mathematics failed to make satisfactory progress and reach a Level 5 by Year 6. This is reflected in parent questionnaire responses where a few parents expressed concerns about the progress made by higher attaining pupils. However, underachievement is not confined to this group. There is some underachievement in all year groups and amongst all groups of pupils, including those with learning difficulties. It is well evident in the fact that the proportion of pupils who make satisfactory progress in their time at the school does not compare favourably with primary schools nationally. The arrival of the new headteacher has resulted in a swift change of focus, with the raising of standards identified as a key priority for the school.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. They grow in confidence, have a clear understanding of right and wrong, get on well with peers and adults and develop well their knowledge of why some have different customs and beliefs. They grow to understand their own feelings and empathise with others. They understand how to behave well and this is evident in their polite and courteous manner when speaking to adults, whether visitors or staff. However, occasionally pupils show a lack of application in lessons and do not get on quickly

enough with tasks. There are limited opportunities for them to learn independently, so their capacity for this is not adequately developed. Attendance is good, being higher than national averages. Many pupils say that they enjoy coming to school, but fewer enjoy lessons. They are well aware of precautions they need to take to keep safe, such as when using the Internet. They eat healthily at school and are enthusiastically involved in physical education and sports clubs. The trim trail is used well. Pupils are proud of their capacity to initiate activities such as lunchtime clubs. They also make suggestions for improvements, such as the benches on the playground and older pupils take seriously their roles such as 'squabble stoppers' and Year 6 prefects. Pupils show concern for others and contribute to the wider society by raising funds for charity. However, too many pupils make unsatisfactory progress in developing and improving their key skills in literacy and numeracy at the higher levels, and this is a significant weakness in their overall personal development.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 4

Subject leaders have an over-generous view of the overall quality of teaching because they do not take sufficient account of its impact on pupils' progress. The headteacher has correctly identified key weaknesses in teaching including planning to meet individual needs and accuracy of assessment. She is aware that current rates of progress, which result from weaknesses in teaching, need to accelerate if pupils are to reach higher standards. Teaching relies too much on tests instead of more regular ongoing assessment of what pupils know, how they are progressing and where there are gaps in their learning. Consequently, the work set for some pupils is either too hard, or as identified in the previous inspection, too easy. A strength of teaching is the good relationships that staff have with pupils, who are managed well, and this creates a suitable climate for learning. Some teaching enables pupils to use their initiative, such as raising questions, but there are too few opportunities for independent learning in lessons and too often pupils are passive in their learning. This is when pupils lose concentration and progress stalls. The pace of lessons is not always brisk enough to move learning along at a suitable rate. In the classroom, teaching assistants are not always used effectively to support pupils who experience difficulties in learning. As a result, these pupils make inadequate progress in some lessons.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum meets statutory requirements. It is broad and balanced and includes a modern foreign language. There is suitable enrichment, including master classes for gifted and talented pupils and a range of after-school clubs. Visitors to the school inspire some good quality art work and pupils' enjoyment of a visiting theatre group was well evident during the inspection. The headteacher is arranging links with other schools as part of an identified need to make the curriculum more appealing. The recent introduction of a residential visit for older pupils has met with approval from parents and pupils alike. As a result of additional provision, pupils who start at the school with little English make sufficient progress in acquiring speaking and listening skills. The small-group provision for pupils who find learning difficult at times is satisfactory. Last academic year, additional teaching in groups was successful in accelerating some Year 6 pupils' progress in writing, but this was not sufficient to enable all pupils to reach the English standards of which they were capable.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 4

Good liaison with the adjacent infant school helps pupils to settle quickly and happily. Staff care well for the pupils, and parents are satisfied with the care and concern shown for their children. Arrangements for safeguarding pupils and assuring their health and safety are carefully managed. The school works constructively with other agencies to analyse the needs of those who find learning difficult. Nutritious lunches prepared on site and sensible rules about snacks brought into school encourage pupils to develop healthy eating habits. However, academic guidance and support are inadequate. Pupils' progress is not monitored with sufficient frequency or rigour, and the targets that are set for individual pupils are sometimes too numerous so that pupils find it hard to remember what they are. Occasionally, targets are inaccurately matched to the needs of pupils. Teachers' marking is inconsistent. At best it is thorough and gives pointers for improvement, but pupils say that it is not always helpful in indicating how they can improve.

Leadership and management

Grade: 4

The headteacher has taken steps to develop the roles of staff with leadership responsibilities and they feel well supported in extending their roles. Hitherto, they carried out many of the tasks expected of subject leaders. However, they have yet to be fully involved in accurately monitoring and evaluating pupils' progress or the impact of their actions, so they lack the skills to do this. As a result, they have not been successful in identifying precisely where weakness lies and some actions taken have not therefore been successful in raising standards. Since September, training courses have been arranged and other sources of support used to help staff become more skilled. Staff have also been given a suitable amount of time to carry out management tasks.

The Governing Body is not in a position where it can hold the school to account for its performance. The chair and vice chair of governors are both new to their roles. Training has been arranged for governors later this term. The chair is supportive, has a sound grasp of the school's strengths and weaknesses and is a member of the active parents' and friends' organisation that raises considerable sums of money for the school. Whilst the headteacher has the skills and experience to drive the school forward, neither senior leaders nor governors are currently in a position to contribute fully to school improvement.

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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?	4
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	No
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well being?	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	4

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	4
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	4
How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress	4

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?	3
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
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	3
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	3
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	4

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?	4
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	4

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	4
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	4
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	4
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	4
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	3
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	3
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	Yes
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

17 October 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Ravensdale Junior School, Mickleover, DE3 9EY

Thank you for making us welcome in your school, especially to those who talked to us about school life. We enjoyed our visit.

We were pleased to hear that many of you enjoy coming to school and we liked the happy atmosphere and the way that you all get on so well together. The school lunches are good and we were impressed with the way you make healthy eating choices and take plenty of exercise in school. We found that you know well how to keep yourselves safe. Those of you that have jobs to do in school do them well and the school council is helping to present your ideas on how to improve the school. You are helping others when you raise funds for charities.

We came to see how well your school is doing and whether there are any ways in which it could become better. We found that too many of you are not making enough progress and so your school is not effective as it could be. We have asked Mrs Martin, the staff and governors to help you make even faster progress. We have asked the teachers to make sure that they plan lessons where the work helps you to make progress and is not too hard or too easy. We have also asked the staff to keep a close check on the progress that you make so that anyone who is falling behind can be given extra help. There is a lot to do and Mrs Martin cannot do it all herself, so the governors and the staff who have responsibilities are going to improve their skills so that they can help too. We have decided that the school needs some extra help from others. This arrangement is called 'special measures'. It means that inspectors will visit regularly to check its progress. You can help by working hard in all your lessons and remembering what your targets are.

We wish you all well.

Yours sincerely,

Mrs S Aldridge

Lead inspector