

John Rankin Junior School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	109825
Local Authority	West Berkshire
Inspection number	346416
Inspection dates	29–30 June 2010
Reporting inspector	Graham Lee

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 which gives Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills (HMCI) the authority to cause any school to be inspected. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Junior
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	7–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	230
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Malcom Douglas
Headteacher	Sue Brown and Linda Valenti (executive)
Date of previous school inspection	3 December 2008
School address	Henshaw Crescent Newbury Berkshire RG14 6ES
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. Inspectors observed 16 lessons taught by nine teachers. Meetings were held with members of the leadership team, three members of the governing body, groups of pupils and two parent 'champions'. They observed the school's work, and looked at school documentation including the raising achievement plan and information about pupils' progress. They considered the views of 46 parents and carers reflected in their responses to a questionnaire sent out by school leaders.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following:

the extent to which the quality of teaching has improved since the last inspection
the effectiveness of academic guidance in helping pupils to improve
how well teaching helps pupils to improve their writing skills
the extent to which leadership at all levels is effective in raising achievement and improving teaching and learning.

Information about the school

This is an average sized junior school where few pupils are known to be eligible for free school meals. The vast majority of pupils are of White British heritage. The remainder come from a range of backgrounds but none are at an early stage of learning to speak English. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is above average. Many of these have moderate learning difficulties and social and emotional problems. Following the last inspection, the school formed a hard federation with the adjoining infant school. The headteacher of the infant school was appointed as executive headteacher and works in partnership with the substantive headteacher. The two schools have a shared governing body but retain their own separate identity. There have been substantial changes to the teaching and leadership of the school since the last inspection. A new deputy headteacher was appointed in January 2010.

At its last inspection, the school was deemed to require special measures because of inadequacies related to the quality of teaching and assessment, pupils' achievement in writing and the leadership of the school.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

3

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

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. The school now provides a satisfactory education for its pupils and has improved significantly under the clear and purposeful leadership of the senior team. They have built on the school's strengths and have a realistic understanding of its weaknesses, which they have galvanised staff to tackle with vigour and determination. Better teaching is leading to accelerating progress and rising attainment. Leadership at all levels has been strengthened considerably and the governing body is perceptive and challenging. Consequently, the school has good capacity to continue to improve.

Good care and support are at the heart of the school's work and pupils are looked after well. Parents and carers support their children's view that they feel safe and secure at school. Pupils generally behave well in lessons and around the school. The few instances of disruptive behaviour are dealt with well by staff. Pupils with special educational needs are well supported and make as much progress as their peers. Most pupils enjoy their education which is reflected in their above average attendance. They particularly like the wide range of additional opportunities, notably in sport, which contributes well to their good adoption of a healthy lifestyle. The school is a cohesive community and links are established at the local level to support pupils' welfare and learning. However, the school's strategy to develop community cohesion at the national and global level is at an early stage of development. Consequently, pupils' understanding of different cultures within the United Kingdom and beyond is currently limited.

Over the last three years, the attainment of pupils leaving the school in Year 6 has been broadly average but too many had not made enough progress from their starting points when they joined the school. Pupils of all abilities now make better progress throughout the school, notably in writing. Those in Year 6 have made particularly good progress this year and are attaining at higher levels in reading, writing and mathematics. Pupils' progress is improving because the teaching is becoming increasingly challenging and engaging pupils more successfully and actively in their learning. Teachers use assessment more effectively to enable pupils to understand where they are and what they need to do to improve. Nevertheless, some inconsistencies remain. Pupils are not always given sufficient opportunities to develop their own ideas and solutions, particularly in science where their progress is patchy as a result. In some lessons, tasks are still not demanding enough and do not fully engage learners. The improving assessment strategies have been particularly effective in raising achievement in writing. Nevertheless, there remains some variation in the extent to which target setting and marking help pupils to improve.

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There are good examples of how a more creative approach to the curriculum enhances pupils' engagement and enjoyment, for example through the 'farm' project in Year 3, and in Years 5 and 6 through the work on *The Tempest* leading to a presentation. These links are not fully established, however, and opportunities are missed to help pupils to see how the different aspects of their learning fit together and to use their numeracy and literacy skills, notably in writing, in other contexts. Moreover, resources for information and communication technology (ICT) are limited, which restricts their use to support pupils' learning in other subjects.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching is so that it is consistently good by July 2011 through:
 - ensuring that expectations are consistently high and that pupils of all abilities are challenged to achieve as well as they can
 - embedding target setting and approaches to marking so that they consistently help pupils to improve.
- Develop the curriculum to make it more creative and enjoyable for pupils through:
 - making more links between subjects to help pupils see how their learning fits together
 - improving resourcing and the use of ICT to support pupils' learning
 - giving pupils more opportunities to write in a range of contexts
 - providing more opportunities for pupils to develop their own ideas and solutions, particularly in science.
- Develop the school's strategy for community cohesion beyond the school and local area to improve pupils' understanding of different cultures within the United Kingdom and worldwide.
- About 40% of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**3**

Pupils generally enjoy lessons and have good attitudes to learning. They discuss their learning willingly with the 'talk partners' and cooperate effectively in groups. They are particularly enthusiastic when they take part in practical activities and have opportunities to explore their own ideas. All these elements were evident in a Year 6 science lesson where pupils worked well together to plan investigations to test the factors that affected the length of a shadow. Pupils are keen to offer their ideas in lessons and take on board suggestions to improve their work. In a few lessons, some pupils lose focus and concentration when activities are undemanding or when they sit for too long without active involvement. As a result, their progress slows. While pupils' progress is accelerating, it is not consistently good throughout the school.

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Many pupils with a range of moderate learning difficulties are helped to become confident learners. As a result, their progress is accelerating in line with other pupils. Those with behavioural and emotional difficulties often make good progress in their development of social skills and management of their own behaviour. The school's focus on writing has improved progress and raised attainment in this area. In particular, boys have been stimulated to write through well-chosen topics.

Although a few pupils and parents and carers have concerns about behaviour, inspectors found that pupils generally play and learn well together and that the school is a calm and orderly learning environment. Pupils know how to keep themselves safe in a variety of situations and make a strong contribution to the school community, through the school council for example. Their contribution to the wider community is more limited. Pupils' good attendance and developing basic skills indicate that they are satisfactorily prepared for the next stage of their education and the world beyond.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	3
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	3
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	3
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	3
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	2
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3

How effective is the provision?

The school's good care and support of its pupils are evident in the support provided for

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low.

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its vulnerable pupils and their parents and carers. A number of pupils were clear that the support structures in place were helping them to feel good about themselves and to make progress. There are good arrangements for transition between classes and on to the next school. This was evident, for example, in a Year 6 lesson when the teacher provided pupils with sensitive support to identify and discuss their concerns about moving on. Pupils' experience is considerably enriched through a wide range of visits, visitors and additional activities in sport and music, for example, as well as the more unusual philosophy and newspaper clubs.

The quality of teaching has improved significantly since the last inspection and is consistently strong in Year 6. There are pockets of good teaching throughout the school but some inconsistencies remain, which have been exacerbated by staff changes and illness. Teachers generally plan well to meet the needs of different pupils. Teaching assistants make a considerable contribution to pupils' progress, particularly of those with special educational needs. The high profile of writing, through visiting authors, for example, has led to significant acceleration in pupils' progress. In a Year 3 lesson, pupils enjoyed identifying the key features of the writing of Roald Dahl in order to improve their own stories. The teaching of science, however, is more patchy, with investigative skills being underdeveloped in some classes. Similarly, there are some good examples of pupils using ICT to develop their learning but the current level of resourcing restricts their access to computers.

The school has made good progress in developing strategies to help pupils to improve their learning. For example, pupils use assessment grids to 'help me to see where I am and where I need to go', as one pupil put it. Nevertheless, this is not consistent. Similarly, while marking is supportive and regular, the extent to which it helps pupils to improve is variable.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	3
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	3
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

The two headteachers have worked successfully in partnership since the formation of the hard federation. They have set high expectations and secured commitment to raising achievement from all members of staff. This is reflected in the school's plans and challenging targets. Leadership at all levels has been strengthened considerably since the last inspection and all leaders play an increasingly important role in improving the school's provision and raising achievement. More robust tracking systems are used to

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identify potential underachievement at an early stage and to provide additional support where necessary. The governing body is knowledgeable and committed and offers a good balance of support and challenge to school leaders.

The school's commitment to the welfare of its pupils is reflected in robust procedures to ensure that they are properly safeguarded. The school is equally resolute in providing equal opportunities and eliminating discrimination. Consequently, any remaining gaps in pupils' performance, for example in relation to boys' writing, are closing and the achievement of all groups of pupils is satisfactory. The school makes a strong contribution to community cohesion within the school and at a local level but has not fully implemented its plans to develop this at national and international levels.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	2
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	3
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	3
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	3
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3

Views of parents and carers

As this was a section 8 inspection, Ofsted did not send out a questionnaire to parents and carers prior to the inspection. However, the school did issue its own survey to which 46 parents and carers responded. These responses show that the views of parents and carers are more positive than they were a few months ago. The vast majority of parents and carers now say that they are happy with their child's overall experience of the school. Some recognised that the school is improving and others commended the warm and welcoming atmosphere. Inspection evidence supports these views. A number of parents and carers still have concerns about their children's progress related to the quality of teaching in some classes. The inspection found that progress is accelerating as a result of better teaching. While all groups of pupils now make satisfactory progress,

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some unevenness in the quality of teaching and rates of progress remains.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Parental questionnaires are not normally distributed for inspections conducted under section 8 of the Education Act 2005, unless inspectors have specific reasons to request that the school does so.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	51	45	0	4
Primary schools	6	41	42	10
Secondary schools	8	34	44	14
Sixth forms	10	37	50	3
Special schools	32	38	25	5
Pupil referral units	12	43	31	14
All schools	9	40	40	10

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above is for the period 1 September to 31 December 2009 and is the most recently published data available (see www.ofsted.gov.uk). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn term 2009 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.■ The quality of teaching.■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships.■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



8 July 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of John Rankin Junior School, Newbury, RG14 6ES

You may remember that I visited your school recently with two other inspectors and I have now made four visits to the school. I have really enjoyed my time at John Rankin Junior. I am writing to thank you all for being so friendly and helpful and to let you know what we found out.

John Rankin Junior now provides you with a satisfactory education. I am pleased to tell you that this means that the school no longer needs special measures. It has improved a lot since the last inspection thanks to the hard work of the headteachers and all the staff. You are looked after well at school and you and your parents and carers told us how safe you feel. Most of you behave well in lessons and around the school. Well done and make sure that you try and concentrate all the time!

You now make better progress, especially in writing, thanks to improving teaching. You told us how much teachers help you to improve your work through targets and marking. You work hard in lessons and enjoy the many extra things you have to do in music and sport for example.

The headteachers and all the staff know that there is more to do to make sure the school continues to improve. We have asked them to do a few things to help.

' We want to make teaching even better by making sure that work is always hard enough to make you think and that your targets and teachers' marking always help you to improve.

' We have asked that you get plenty of opportunities to link different parts of your learning together. In particular, we want you to have more chances to write for different purposes and to use computers in your learning. We have asked teachers to make sure that in science you have lots of chances to follow your own ideas.

' We want the school to make more links with other schools and places in this country and worldwide so that you find out more about different cultures.

Wishing you all the best in the future.

Yours sincerely

Graham Lee

Lead inspector

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