

Rothwell Junior School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	121855
Local Authority	Northamptonshire
Inspection number	380339
Inspection dates	21–22 September 2011
Reporting inspector	Michael Miller

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 of pupils on the school roll	342
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Steve Hill
Headteacher	Lee Hurling (Executive head)
Date of previous school inspection	7 December 2009
School address	Gladstone Street Rothwell Kettering NN14 6ER
Telephone number	01536 710349
Fax number	01536 713299
Email address	head@rothwell-jun.northants-ecl.gov.uk

Age group	7–11
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. They visited 20 lessons and 16 teachers were seen. Inspectors held meetings with representatives of the governing body, and teaching and non-teaching staff. Inspectors talked formally with the school council and other groups of pupils. They attended assemblies, daily form time and registration sessions, looked at pupils' work and talked informally with many pupils. They observed the school's work, and looked at school documents including policies, development planning, self-evaluation reports, monitoring files, curriculum and safeguarding materials. Minutes of meetings of the governing body were examined, including the headteacher's reports to the governing body, and information provided for parents and carers. Inspectors received and analysed questionnaires from 81 parents and carers, 15 members of staff and 112 pupils from Key Stage 2.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at a number of key areas.

- The ways the school has been working to raise attainment in mathematics and pupils' writing, and to improve the achievement of boys throughout the school, were examined.
- The inspectors analysed the development of the school's use of assessment in order to improve both the quality of pupils' learning and day-to-day teaching.
- The team explored the ways the school is developing its curriculum in order to help raise the quality of teaching and accelerate pupils' progress.
- The extent to which the pupils' personal development is an emerging strength of the school was explored.

Information about the school

This is a larger than average-sized school. Most pupils are of White British heritage. The percentages of pupils from minority ethnic groups, and of those who speak English as an additional language, are below average. The proportion identified with special educational needs and/or disabilities is average. The range of pupils' special educational needs includes specific learning difficulties, physical disability and/or autistic spectrum disorder. The percentage of pupils with a statement of special educational needs is above average. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is average. The percentage of pupils continuing their education from Year 3 to Year 6 at the school is above average. The school currently holds an Investors in People award, an Artsmark, Healthy Schools status and the St. John Ambulance Schools Mark.

From September 2011, the school is in a collaborative arrangement with Rothwell Victoria Infant School, pending a formal federation from September 2012. Following the retirement of the infant school headteacher, the junior school headteacher is now executive headteacher of both schools. The infant school was reported on separately by Ofsted in February 2011.

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****3**

Main findings

This is a satisfactory school. Since its last inspection, staff and governors have worked hard to establish the building blocks to enable further improvement. Over the past four years, standards have improved steadily, but have not yet risen above average. The school is still building a track record of sustained improvement. Provisional results for the 2011 national tests indicate average attainment. By the end of Year 6, most pupils have made satisfactory progress. Consequently, teaching, aspects of leadership and management and the school's capacity for improvement are satisfactory. This is because not all of the school's initiatives have had time to impact fully on raising pupils' achievement beyond the satisfactory. Nevertheless, success has resulted from the focused interventions and support for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. This is enabling them to make good progress given their individual starting points. The school is exploring actively how these successful strategies can be shared and adapted to support and accelerate the progress of other groups of pupils. Self-evaluation is sound. School improvement planning shows it knows what it needs to do to secure further improvement. The governing body is being pro-active in seeking additional training to enable it to carry out its monitoring roles more effectively, and achieve the national Governor Mark.

The school has a number of significant strengths. The very large majority of pupils say they enjoy school. This is reflected not only in pupils' good attitudes to learning but also by their high attendance levels. The school community promotes a good ethos for learning. Together with good care and guidance, this underpins well the pupils' good personal development. Behaviour is typically good around the school because pupils respect each other. They develop a good moral and social sense, and by Year 6 prove themselves to be thoughtful young citizens. The pupils show a maturity which enables them to play an active role in school improvement. What is taught has been reviewed; it now focuses effectively on enabling pupils to practise and apply important skills learnt in one subject across a range of others. This development has been enhanced well through the school's consultations with pupils, from all year groups, about the curriculum and their learning. The impact of this is starting to be seen in improved progress for the younger pupils in Years 3 and 4, where the new curriculum and teaching approaches are established more firmly. A challenge for the school is to ensure that the phased introduction of the school's new, creative, skills-based curriculum is completed fully across all year groups.

The school is now introducing more effective monitoring and tracking systems. National approaches to the assessment of pupils' progress are established in literacy.

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This has helped the school to raise standards in writing. Such strategies are starting to be developed for numeracy, in order to close the gap between outcomes in English and mathematics; they have still to be introduced for science. Revised approaches to marking and assessment are helping gradually to raise attainment, particularly for boys. However, the ways marking is used to guide pupils as to their next steps in learning are inconsistent. The monitoring of teaching and learning has been undertaken almost entirely by senior leaders. Middle leaders are involved insufficiently in this aspect of the school's work. They are still developing the skills and expertise to complement the focused approach shown by senior leaders. Year team and subject leaders have been involved in sharing good practice, and this has helped significantly in the construction of the curriculum, and increased challenge for boys. However, there remain inconsistencies in the use of questioning during lessons to check pupils' learning and understanding, and in ensuring opportunities for pupils to become involved more actively in some lessons.

Up to 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.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise attainment, accelerate pupils' progress throughout the school, and extend the school's work to increase the proportion of good and better teaching by:
 - establishing a more consistent approach to the use of assessment in the classroom, particularly through the use of questioning and marking
 - ensuring additional opportunities for pupils to become involved more actively in lessons
 - extending fully to mathematics and science the strategies already adopted for literacy, by the end of the current academic year.
- Strengthen the leadership and management of the school, and enhance its drive for improvement by:
 - ensuring all team and subject leaders develop fully the skills they need to support senior leaders in their work to improve teaching and learning
 - extending the monitoring of lessons to middle leaders
 - furthering the governing body's initiatives to develop its role in monitoring and supporting the school.
- Ensure the completion of the phased introduction of the school's new, creative skills-based curriculum, in order to challenge and inspire pupils even further.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

3

Achievement is satisfactory overall by the end of Year 6 from the pupils' average attainment on entry at the start of Year 3. However, the good progress made by

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pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is due to the records teaching assistants keep in their 'day books' on the learning and progress of such pupils. These daily records help the teachers to identify pupils' needs quickly, and plan and target support effectively. Academic achievement is improving as the school develops its approach to promoting key literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology skills in a cross-curricular way. This was seen in an outstanding Year 3 lesson where the development of writing skills and learning about Viking myths were linked. Pupils made excellent progress in their understanding of 'sequencing' both in terms of history and storytelling. This contributed well to the pupils' appreciation of other cultures and beliefs. In a good Year 4 lesson, following their visit to a local Tudor house, pupils' observation and skills of deduction were developed well through their interpretation of evidence gleaned from Tudor portraits. The introduction of philosophy for the younger pupils is developing effectively their thinking skills.

Pupils' wide, personal qualities, their enterprise skills, teamwork and appreciation of the world beyond their local community are preparing them effectively for their future lives and education. This is reflected well, for example, in the enjoyment they show in learning, and their excellent attendance and punctuality. Their work ethic is a strength. Pupils are considerate, supporting each other well. This is seen in the pupils' anti-bullying campaigning. Their recent prize winning song 'Why Me?' counterpoints the harmony of the music with the shocking message of the anti-bullying lyrics. Pupils contribute significantly to the school's respectful and harmonious atmosphere. In a Year 4 science lesson, pupils questioned the builders on site very politely about the materials they were using. Pupils show a good understanding of what it means to be healthy; they are active in keeping fit when taking part in physical education and sports. There is a very attractive school garden, where pupils are successful in growing their own food, which develops well their understanding of healthy eating. Older pupils take cycle proficiency courses and then ride to school, which helps them keep fit. Pupils also become involved with the wider community through enterprise initiatives to raise funds to help the Kenyan communities with which the school is linked. Year 6 pupils are involved in the 'Young Magistrates' programme, which extends well their citizenship skills. This was shown to good effect in a well-informed and balanced debate during a Year 6 assembly on the contemporary situation of Travellers.

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	2

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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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	2
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	1
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

School life is typified by good working relationships. This is at the heart of the school and underpins the positive contribution of the ways it cares for and supports its pupils and their families. The needs of those whose circumstances may make them more vulnerable are served well. Effective links with various agencies, and other education partners, benefit the pupils well; they enable good support for those with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Families praise the ways the infant and junior schools have collaborated over the past year, and the smooth transition between the different stages of education. With a Children's Centre attached to the infant school, and a single, executive headteacher, the school staff and governors are taking very seriously their responsibility to ensure cohesive care and learning from birth to age 11 and beyond. The impact of this is starting to be seen in a common approach to developing reading and the promotion of learning at home.

Learning and teaching are improving as staff implement the new curriculum, develop more consistent strategies to involve pupils in their learning, and use assessment more effectively. However, the use of questioning in lessons to check pupils' learning is variable; some teachers give pupils too much information and assume pupils understand. Pupils say they feel they learn a lot in lessons, but would like more information as to how well they are doing; their parents and carers reflect these views. Discussions with pupils show they are sometimes uncertain as to their next steps in learning. While pupils find the system of green for 'good' and pink for 'think' highlighting in the marking helpful, written guidance is often inconsistent as to exactly how they are to improve. Teaching assistants challenge well pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. They ask challenging questions and encourage pupils to explain their thinking. Pupils who find it more difficult to learn or to behave consistently well are usually given good guidance and support by the adults around them. Where lessons are less challenging or stimulating, pupils tend to be involved less actively in learning. Consequently, some pupils become distracted at times and their attention wanders. Nevertheless, pupils are keen to become involved in debate, and discussion partners are used well across the school to develop ideas.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

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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	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

The good work of the headteacher in driving improvement is recognised by staff, governors, parents, carers and pupils alike. He is supported ably by his deputy, who now has a non-teaching role and is focusing more on the monitoring of teaching and learning. However, the role of middle leaders in this work is underdeveloped. All staff responding to their questionnaire indicate they are proud of their school and feel involved in what they are working to achieve. A sound commitment to ensuring equality of opportunity is resulting in the steady closing of gaps in outcomes between mathematics and English, and particularly for boys. The development of new assessment systems for mathematics, and exploring additional ways the pupils may practise their numeracy skills through other subjects, is high on the school's agenda.

Governance is satisfactory. The governing body is looking to develop further ways through which its monitoring role may be improved. Nevertheless, governors use their personal and professional expertise well, and support the school actively. The safeguarding of pupils is good overall. It is very good in practice, and records regarding the pupils and links with support agencies are all maintained properly. There are significant strengths in the school's approach to health and safety; for example, there are child-friendly notices around the building works, which help keep the pupils safe.

The school takes its responsibility to engage with its families very seriously; this has been reflected in the consultations over the past year concerning the plans for federation. This is an example of the school's good approach to community cohesion, and the way it takes responsibly its role within the community. The school has a specific action plan to develop further community cohesion, but its impact is already to be seen in the involvement of pupils with the wider community, their good understanding of the world around them and their development as good citizens.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	3
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	3
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	3

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The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
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	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3

Views of parents and carers

The proportion of parents and carers responding to the questionnaire was average. The very large majority, including those with whom inspectors talked in the playground, are very happy with their children's experience at the school and responded affirmatively to all the questions. All the returns were particularly appreciative of the ways the school keeps their children safe. Typical comments from parents and carers include: 'The school's atmosphere is always warm and welcoming', and 'The staff at this school are passionate and committed to making sure each child makes academic and personal progress.' The inspection findings reflect these views. A few returns and written comments indicated concerns about the rate of the children's progress. Inspectors found that while progress has improved since the last inspection, there is scope for further improvement; achieving this is a key focus of the school's improvement planning. A very few parents and carers feel the school takes insufficient account of their suggestions and concerns. School records, and its response to its own surveys, show it takes any concerns expressed by its families very seriously. There are daily opportunities for both formal and informal contact with staff, when any concerns may be discussed. In addition, there is a half-termly parents' forum; however, attendance at this is not as high as the school could wish.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Rothwell Junior School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 81 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 342 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	53	65	24	30	4	5	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	54	67	27	33	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	32	40	42	52	3	4	1	1
My child is making enough progress at this school	33	41	39	48	4	5	1	1
The teaching is good at this school	45	56	32	40	1	1	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	38	47	38	47	4	5	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	31	38	44	54	4	5	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	45	56	30	37	2	2	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	34	42	41	51	2	2	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	35	43	41	51	1	1	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	29	36	43	53	1	1	1	1
The school is led and managed effectively	51	63	26	32	1	1	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	52	64	27	33	1	1	0	0

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all 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	43	47	10	0
Primary schools	6	46	42	6
Secondary schools	14	36	41	9
Sixth forms	15	42	41	3
Special schools	30	48	19	3
Pupil referral units	14	50	31	5
All schools	10	44	39	6

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 are for the period 1 September 2010 to 08 April 2011 and are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 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.

Sixth form figures reflect the judgements made for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

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 pupils' 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.



23 September 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Rothwell Junior School, Kettering, NN14 6ER

Yours is a satisfactory school. You have a good school motto, 'Achievement through Respect, Creativity, Endeavour and Enjoyment.' We saw that you enjoy school, we appreciated the respect you show for each other, and we recognised the ways by which your teachers are working to make what you learn even more creative and interesting. We know that, together with your teachers, you are endeavouring to make sure your school becomes an even better place to be day by day.

These are the things we found that are best about you and your school.

- Your attendance is excellent because you enjoy coming to school.
- You behave well and know how to keep each other safe and healthy at school.
- You make a good contribution to the school and wider community.
- Your school works well with others, including your families, to help you learn.
- The adults at your school take good care of you and look after you well.
- Your time at the school helps to prepare you well for your future lives.

We have asked your teachers to do some extra things to help all of you make even better progress, attain higher levels in your work and become involved increasingly actively in lessons and learning. They will be developing further the ways they mark and assess your work. They will be giving you additional, written help and advice so you can be sure of what you need to do to improve. Those teachers and school governors who have responsibility for each year group or subject will be working closely with your headteacher and his deputy. As part of this work they will visit your lessons more often to help them make sure you achieve well. Finally, your teachers will be completing the work they have started to make sure that what you learn is always interesting, challenging and creative.

During assembly you all enjoyed watching slides of the Year 6 pupils' activities during their residential visit the previous week. You understood well an important message from this, 'Together we can achieve anything.' Please continue to do so.

Yours sincerely

Michael Miller
Lead inspector

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