

R A Butler Academy Infant School

South Road, Saffron Walden, CB11 3DG

Inspection dates 9–10 May 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected	
	This inspection:	Requires improvement	3
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Requires improvement	3

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement. It is not good because

- Teaching is not consistently good and does not enable pupils to always make good progress.
- Some pupils who are disabled and those who have special educational needs, and those who are supported by the pupil premium, do not make consistently good progress because they are not always given work that is matched closely enough to their needs.
- When marking work, teachers do not give precise guidance to pupils to help them achieve the highest standards.
- Teaching assistants working in classrooms are not given clear guidance about how to support pupils' learning.
- Reading, writing and mathematics are not taught consistently well because teachers' expectations are sometimes too low. Pupils are not provided with enough opportunities to write at length.
- School leaders, including governors, are not improving teaching and achievement as fast as they need to.
- Monitoring of learning by school leaders lacks focus and does not give sufficient attention to the progress of different groups of pupils.
- School improvement planning and self-evaluation do not demonstrate how key areas are to be developed and evaluated.

The school has the following strengths

- Pupils behave well. Their safety and welfare are continuously promoted.
- Strong relationships between pupils and adults make a positive contribution to learning.
- Attendance is above average and pupils enjoy coming to school.
- Planning for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good.
- There are many opportunities to share and value pupils' work in classrooms and other areas. Pupils are justifiably proud of the high quality of their art and design work.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 17 lessons of which four were jointly observed with the acting headteacher.
- Inspectors looked at a range of evidence, including: the school's improvement plan; data for tracking pupils' progress; the school's policies on safeguarding, special educational needs and behaviour; minutes of governing body meetings; displays of pupils' work; and the resources used in the Early Years Foundation Stage.
- Inspectors analysed work in pupils' books and folders with senior leaders.
- Meetings were held with two groups of pupils, senior leaders, groups of staff and members of the Governing Body, including the Chair and Vice-Chair.
- Inspectors met with the executive headteacher designate.
- Eight pupils from Year 1 and Year 2 read to inspectors.
- The views of parents were sought at the start and end of the school day.
- Inspectors took account of the 81 responses to the parents' online questionnaire (Parent View). They also considered written comments from 34 staff.

Inspection team

Adam Higgins, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Janet Watson

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- R A Butler Academy Infant School converted to become an academy school on 1 November 2010. When the predecessor school, R A Butler Infant School, was last inspected by Ofsted, it was judged to be outstanding.
- It is smaller than the average-sized school.
- It shares the site with the neighbouring Academy Junior School with which it is in a hard federation. There is a single shared governing body that includes parent representation from both schools.
- Due to the recent departure of the executive headteacher, the school has been led by an acting headteacher since October 2012. The acting headteacher was previously the deputy headteacher. A new executive headteacher takes up the post in September 2013.
- There are eight classes from Reception to Year 2. One of the classes caters for children from both Years 1 and 2.
- The very large majority of pupils are from White British backgrounds. Very few pupils speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported through school action is below average. The proportion supported through school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is below average.
- The proportion of pupils for whom the school is receiving additional income from the government (the pupil premium) is below average. These pupils are known to be eligible for free school meals or from families with a parent in the armed forces. There are no children in the care of the local authority in the school.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching so that it is all consistently good or better by:
 - making better use of information about how well the pupils are doing to ensure that work is more closely matched to their abilities and that all groups of pupils make good progress
 - providing sharper guidance for the pupils so that they have a better understanding of what they have done well and what they need to do to improve further
 - ensuring that additional adults working in the classrooms know what they need to do in order to support pupils' learning, particularly those who are disabled or who have special educational needs and those for whom the school receives additional funding through the pupil premium.
- Raise standards throughout the school in reading, writing and mathematics so that, by July 2014, they are above average, by:
 - planning lessons which ensure that all pupils are challenged, in particular the more able
 - ensuring that pupils have more opportunities to practise their writing and to use and apply their knowledge of letters and the sounds that they make
- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management by ensuring that:
 - when checking the quality of teaching, more emphasis is given to how well teachers are improving the achievement of all pupils

- improvement plans and self-evaluation are more sharply focused on raising achievement, have clear timescales and identify precisely what will show whether the school is making the difference it is seeking.

An external review of governance should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and governance may be improved.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Achievement requires improvement because the rate at which pupils make progress varies from year to year. Pupils do not make consistently good progress in reading, writing and mathematics because teaching is not sufficiently well planned to meet the learning needs of particular groups of pupils.
- Children join Reception with skills that are above those that would normally be expected for their age. Children start in Year 1 having made the progress they should, and with skill levels that are above those expected for their age. In 2012, their communication, language and literacy skills and their mathematical understanding had improved significantly. However, the work set for individuals and for groups of children does not always build upon what they can already do. This limits the progress that they make.
- Progress is not consistent in Key Stage 1 and standards at the end of Year 2 are now only broadly average. They have fallen since 2010. Here, some pupils are not making progress fast enough because the teaching is not consistently good and pupils are often given tasks that are too easy.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make inconsistent progress as they move through the school. The work that they are given is not always challenging enough or carefully matched to their needs and abilities.
- Pupil premium funding is being used to provide a higher ratio of adults to children in Year 1 and to enable access for all pupils to visits and sporting activities. School leaders have not evaluated the impact of their actions on the progress made by eligible pupils, which is variable across the school. There were not enough pupils known to be eligible for free school meals in 2012 to comment on their attainment without identifying them.
- Year 1 pupils who took the screening check in phonics (the sounds that letters make) gained results that were better than those seen nationally.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- The quality of teaching requires improvement because it is not yet consistently good.
- Teachers do not always use the information that they have about pupils' progress to plan activities that meet their learning needs or that is tailored to their different ability levels. Occasionally, all pupils are given the same work to do regardless of their ability. More-able pupils say that the work is sometimes too easy especially in mathematics and that they are not always challenged to think hard.
- In the best lessons, teachers have a good understanding of their subject and use this well to challenge pupils' thinking and work at a fast pace. For example, in a problem-solving mathematics lesson, the teacher asked questions which challenged pupils and encouraged them to make links to their prior learning.
- In some lessons, teaching assistants are not always given clear guidance about what they need to do to support pupils and this slows the learning of the children that they work with.

- The marking of pupils' work is inconsistent across the school. It is better in English than it is in mathematics. Pupils are not given enough information about what they need to do next in order to improve their work and there are too few opportunities for pupils to respond to teachers' marking.
- There are many opportunities for pupils to read, and they develop into confident readers with a love of books. However, there are too few opportunities for them to write at length and to practise their skills in different subjects and to use and apply their knowledge of letters and the sounds that they make.
- In all lessons, there are good relationships between staff and pupils. Pupils have positive attitudes towards their learning and want to please their teachers. Classrooms are generally well organised and pupils' work is attractively displayed. In many classes, pupils have the opportunity to share ideas with each other. Interactive whiteboards are often used to engage pupils and enhance the quality of teaching. For example, in one lesson, a whiteboard was used well to show the class the moment that a butterfly hatched from its chrysalis.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Teachers use effective strategies to manage pupils' behaviour in lessons. Pupils' demonstrate positive attitudes towards their learning, especially when the teaching is lively and engaging. Disruption to lessons is rare and pupils enjoy working with adults and their classmates.
- Pupils show respect to adults and visitors to the school. They enjoy showing how well behaved they are. This contributes to an orderly and calm atmosphere around the school, and to making it a cohesive community.
- Pupils' behaviour both in and around the school is good. Children are trained from Reception to move around the school quietly and in an orderly fashion. They care for each other well and are polite and kind to one another and to the adults in the school.
- The school places emphasis on meeting the emotional and social needs of pupils. Assemblies are used to celebrate and share the efforts and achievements of pupils and adults. One assembly not only celebrated the achievement of Reception children in improving their handwriting but also the commitment of a member of staff in training to run a marathon.
- Parents are confident that pupils are safe and well cared for while they are at school. Pupils know how to keep themselves safe. As one pupil said, 'There are lots of people here that I know and trust.' They understand the ways in which they can protect themselves when using computers and the internet.
- Pupils know about different types of bullying. They say that there is very little bullying at the school. They know that if they have any concern they can speak to any adult who will deal with it quickly and fairly. Parents and staff believe that the school manages behaviour and any incidents of bullying effectively and quickly.
- The school's strategies to ensure that pupils attend school regularly are successful. For example, families are telephoned to ascertain the reason for non-attendance on the first day of any absence. However, there are a small number of pupils who are frequently absent from school. Leaders plan to further develop strategies to support these pupils in attending more regularly.

The leadership and management requires improvement

- Important aspects of the school require improvement because some actions taken have not been effective at improving the rates of progress that pupils make and the quality of teaching. Leaders do not have a clear enough view of the schools' strengths and weaknesses and, consequently, school improvement plans do not focus enough on improving pupils' achievement or on addressing weaknesses in teaching.
 - Leaders have not brought enough consistency to the quality of teaching to ensure that all pupils make good progress. They observe teaching regularly but do not link their judgements well enough to the impact that the teaching has on pupils' achievement. As a result, leaders have an overly generous view of how well the school is doing.
 - Improvements are currently being managed well during a time of change. Leaders are sharpening the way in which they evaluate the impact of learning on pupils' achievement and holding teachers to account for progress. Regular pupil progress meetings have been introduced to identify how teaching can be improved to support vulnerable pupils in making faster progress. This is demonstrating that the school has the capacity to improve.
 - Subject leaders with particular responsibilities are working together in small groups to develop different aspects of the school's work. For example, the 'problem-solving' team are developing ideas to link mathematics, science, design technology and information and communication technology so that pupils' can apply their skills learned in one subject to other areas.
 - The school plans a wide range of topics through the recently introduced International Primary Curriculum. Many opportunities are made to extend pupils' learning beyond the classroom; for example, on visits to the local nature reserve and learning in the school grounds at 'forest school'. Pupils have the chance to take part in a range of after-school activities, including cricket, recorder, cookery and French.
 - Leaders are committed to ensuring that there is no discrimination within the school and have a strong focus on ensuring equal opportunities for all pupils.
 - Other opportunities support the development of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness. Events and visitors inform pupils about their world and the diversity of the United Kingdom. For example, each class studies the lives of people in different countries. This is raising pupils' awareness of cultural differences.
 - **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors are extremely committed to the school. They have a range of skills and expertise that are invaluable to the school. A number of governors have been supporting the school and its predecessor for many years. Key governors have a growing understanding of the strengths of the school and are aware of the areas in which the school needs to improve further. They scrutinise the school's data but, until recently, have not had enough information to enable them to hold leaders fully to account for improving achievement. They know how the pupil premium is being spent but have not as yet begun to evaluate its impact. They have received information about the performance of staff against their appraisal targets but have not directly linked this information to decisions about salary rises. The governing body ensures that the school fulfils its statutory responsibilities and safeguarding procedures meet requirements.
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What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	136325
Local authority	Not applicable
Inspection number	412887

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

Type of school	Academy converter
School category	Non-maintained
Age range of pupils	4–7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	220
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Steve Morgan
Acting Headteacher	Jenny Fogarty
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
Telephone number	01799 523652
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