

The Ryde School

Pleasant Rise, Hatfield, AL9 5DR

Inspection dates 12–13 June 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Outstanding	1
	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

- Pupils' achievement, including in the Early Years Foundation Stage, varies too much, especially in writing and mathematics.
- Standards in English fell in summer 2012 and were below average in mathematics.
- In some lessons, teachers spend too much time introducing and explaining tasks so that pupils cannot start their work quickly.
- Teachers do not use questioning well enough to find out what pupils already know. As a result, teachers do not always set work at the right level of difficulty for different pupils.
- Marking does not always show how work can be improved. Pupils do not have sufficient time to correct and add to their work.
- Teachers in charge of areas of the school's work do not have sufficient skills to check teaching effectively.
- Governors have not led plans to raise standards at the school. They support school leaders but do not challenge them enough about pupils' achievement or the quality of teaching.

The school has the following strengths

- Pupils achieve well in reading.
- The school is using the pupil premium well to close the gap between the attainment of eligible pupils and their classmates.
- The school has improved the quality and safety of its site. The new areas for outdoor learning in the Early Years Foundation Stage are helping children to make good progress in their social and physical development.
- Pupils feel safe and behave well.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is strong. Pupils respect each other and take their responsibilities seriously.
- The headteacher, ably supported by the new deputy headteacher, provides determined leadership and ambition. Morale amongst staff is high.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 10 lessons, taught by eight teachers. Six of these lessons were observed jointly with senior leaders. In addition, inspectors made short visits to lessons to observe pupils' learning in different subjects. They visited the Year 6 workshops which replaced pupils' usual lessons during the two days of the inspection. Inspectors listened to pupils read, attended two assemblies and observed break times.
- The inspection team considered the views expressed in 50 responses to the online Parent View survey. Inspectors also took account of the outcomes from the school's own parent surveys, together with one letter received from a parent. They spoke with several parents at the start of the second day of the inspection.
- Meetings were held with a group of pupils, governors, school leaders and other staff. Inspectors had two meetings with the representative of the local authority.
- The inspection team took account of the views of staff, including those given in 13 staff questionnaires.
- Inspectors looked at various aspects of the school's work, including the school's analysis of how well it is doing and its improvement plan. They analysed information provided by the school showing pupils' progress. Inspectors considered policies, documents relating to behaviour, safeguarding and other aspects of the school's work. They viewed minutes of governing body meetings and local authority reports.
- During the first day of the inspection, the Year 5 class and a number of staff were away from the school on a visit to York.

Inspection team

Elizabeth Cooper, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

John Greevy

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The Ryde School is similar in size to the average primary school. Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage are taught in the school's Nursery and in the Reception class.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for support through the pupil premium (the additional government funding for looked after children and pupils known to be eligible for free school meals) is below the national average.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported at school action is just below the national average. The proportion of pupils supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is below the national average.
- Just over one-quarter of pupils come from minority ethnic groups. The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is in line with the national average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- The school runs breakfast and after-school clubs.
- The school does not make use of any external provision for pupils.
- The new headteacher took up her permanent post in September 2012 after one term as acting headteacher. There is one deputy headteacher in the senior leadership team who was appointed to the permanent post in April 2013, after two terms as acting deputy headteacher. Since the end of last year, more than half of the teachers are new to the school.
- The school has achieved a number of awards including the Eco-schools green flag and the Healthy School Award.
- The school has recently completed a programme to improve the outdoor facilities for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage and to make the school site more secure.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching, so that all pupils can make good or better progress, by making sure that teachers:
 - provide better support for children's writing and mathematics in the Early Years Foundation Stage
 - ask questions which check how much pupils already know, so that teachers can give pupils activities to stretch them fully in their learning
 - reduce the length of their introductions and explanations and give pupils more opportunity to work by themselves, checking their progress regularly so that they can provide further challenge or support where needed
 - provide pupils with enough information on how they can improve their written work, and then give pupils the opportunity to respond to their teachers' advice in lessons.
- Strengthen leadership and management by making sure that:
 - other leaders in the school have opportunities to develop their leadership skills, so that they can contribute to improving the quality of teaching in their areas of responsibility
 - governors receive specific training so that they contribute fully to planning the priorities for the school and can hold school leaders better to account for the achievement of all pupils.
- An external review of governance should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Most pupils make the progress expected of them, but not enough pupils make really rapid progress, and there is too much variation in different year groups. The school's own information on how pupils are doing across each year group shows that pupils are not yet consistently making good progress, particularly in writing and mathematics.
- Children join the Nursery with skills that are broadly typical for their age. By the end of the Reception Year, children make the progress expected of them. The outdoor environment is used well to develop children's social and physical skills. However, children do not make as much progress in writing and mathematics. This is because activities are not always planned to make sure that children can learn as much as possible.
- At Key Stage 1, standards were above the national average in 2012. However, at Key Stage 2, too few pupils made good progress in mathematics, and their attainment in writing was lower than in previous years. Pupils are doing better in the current Year 6, with more pupils expected to make good progress in mathematics.
- Most classes are now making good progress in reading because there is a clearly planned programme which is helping pupils to understand the books they are reading. The work done to develop pupils' skills in linking sounds and letters (phonics) this year has paid off, as all Year 1 pupils were successful in their recent national screening test.
- In the 2012 mathematics tests, Year 6 pupils eligible for the pupil premium funding were almost one and a half years behind those who were not eligible, with a gap of just over six months in English. This year, the school has used the funding well to provide catch-up sessions for small groups led by trained adults. This has made a considerable difference as Year 6 eligible pupils are now ahead of their classmates in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs mostly make the progress expected of them. In some classes, their progress is more rapid than that of other pupils because of better help and guidance from teachers and other adults.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- Although some good teaching was observed during the inspection, teaching varied in quality across the different classes. Teaching requires improvement because not enough pupils are yet making really good progress.
- In lessons requiring improvement, teachers spend too long on the introduction to the learning, and there are too few opportunities for pupils to take part or to work on their own and find things out for themselves. In Reception, teachers do not always plan work carefully enough to ensure children cover as much ground as quickly as they should.
- Not all teachers make the most of questioning or pupils' discussions to find out how much pupils already knew. This resulted in some pupils moving on to work that was not set at the right level of difficulty.
- The quality of marking varies. Pupils told inspectors that teachers often talked to them about the

work which they had marked, but that teachers did not always write detailed comments. In some good examples of marking in Year 6, the teacher gave pupils clear guidance on what they needed to do to improve and other pupils made helpful comments on their classmates' work. Pupils were also given time to correct their answers. However, this good practice is not consistently found across the school and teachers generally offer more helpful comments on pupils' work in English than in mathematics.

- Most pupils enjoy the activities planned for their lessons and know where to look for further information or resources to help them. Even where the work was less interesting, pupils were usually very willing to try hard with their learning.
- In the best teaching, teachers make good use of 'talk partners' to encourage pupils to discuss their ideas. Pupils work willingly together and develop good answers to share with their classmates, and this allows the teacher to check their understanding. Lessons are planned well and explained clearly by the teacher so that pupils know what they are expected to learn and can set to work quickly.
- Other adults in the lesson often provide good support to groups of pupils, particularly those who are disabled or who have special educational needs, or who are eligible for the pupil premium. In a Year 1 religious education lesson, for example, the teacher and her assistant were both skilled at helping pupils as they worked in their groups, and this meant that pupils made good progress.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Pupils behave well in lessons and are keen to learn. Pupils usually work hard and enjoy what they do, although occasionally a small number do not concentrate as well when they have to listen for a long period of time at the start of the lesson.
- Pupils' attendance has improved for several years running and is now average. Their punctuality to school and to lessons is also better.
- The school has invested in better security around the site, and pupils explained to inspectors that this helped them feel safer. They were equally confident about 'top tips' for staying safe on the internet. The majority of parents who responded to the online survey Parent View agreed that their children are happy and safe.
- A small number of parents considered that there was some bullying in the school, but pupils told inspectors that bullying was rare: 'the teachers would sort out any problems quickly and the headteacher is very available'. New pupils are made welcome and settle quickly.
- Pupils enjoy the break times more since the school introduced new equipment and games earlier this year, with Year 6 play leaders helping younger pupils to play together well. Pupils who find it harder to catch and throw are given extra help, so that they become more confident to join in the games.
- Pupils contribute well to everyday life at the school, developing good leadership skills. They take it in turns to entertain a group of older people to lunch each week. Year 6 pupils redesigned the storage spaces in the cloakroom, while other pupils are actively involved in saving energy and recycling, supported by the governors' Eco-committee.

The leadership and management requires improvement

- Although the headteacher and the new deputy headteacher have worked hard to improve the quality of teaching and to raise attainment, they have not yet ensured that all teaching is good enough for pupils to make really rapid progress. Variations in the quality of teaching remain and are restricting pupils' achievement.
 - Because of the substantial changes in staffing during this year, most subject leaders are new to their role and do not yet have the skills to check the quality of teaching in their area.
 - The new headteacher has provided clear and ambitious leadership since her appointment at the start of the year. All who responded to the staff questionnaire strongly agreed they were proud to be a member of staff at the school: 'I am very happy working at this school. I feel we all work as a team'.
 - The school's two senior leaders check lessons and pupils' work regularly. Senior leaders have set targets linked to the government's standards for teachers, and teachers are better held to account for the progress their pupils make. Teachers have visited another local school to exchange ideas, with the special educational needs coordinator from that school providing valuable advice to The Ryde School.
 - The school has worked hard to involve its parents, particularly during the period of considerable change during the past year. In turn, parents show their commitment to the school by listening to reading and attending special assemblies. Governors have gone out of their way to meet with parents at school events, and the Chair of Governors speaks with all parents of the Reception class before their children start at the school.
 - Pupils are taught a broad and balanced range of subjects. Lessons include interesting topics and themes, ranging from 'outdoor adventures' to designing mosaics, with group activities helping pupils to develop good social skills. Year 6 pupils were proud to demonstrate the creative results of their 'animation nation' day, while the magistrates' workshop helped them think about moral issues. Pupils learn about different cultures in their celebrations of religious festivals. Their enthusiastic singing in assemblies made a good contribution to their spiritual development.
 - The local authority has provided additional support to the new headteacher and advised the school on improvements to children's education in the Early Years Foundation Stage. The local authority has supported the headteacher in tackling weaker teaching, but its views on the quality of achievement in the school were more generous than the findings of the inspection.
 - The arrangements for safeguarding pupils meet legal requirements.
 - **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors have helped to guide the school through an unsettled time, providing strong support to the new headteacher. They give generously of their time to the school, making sure that school policies and practices meet statutory requirements and playing a leading role in improving the school site and its security. They have kept good control of the budget.
 - Governors are aware of the main strengths and areas for improvement and set targets to the headteacher. However, they have been insufficiently involved in planning how the school should improve achievement, and raising pupils' attainment has not been a sufficiently high priority for governors.
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- Despite their visits to the school, governors do not have enough detailed knowledge about the quality of teaching. Governors are, however, aware that rewards for teachers must be linked to good teaching but have not had sufficient oversight to know whether this is, in fact, happening.
 - Governors know how the pupil premium funding is being used and they keep themselves informed about the difference it is making in helping eligible pupils to succeed. The training from the local authority has helped governors look at the data in more detail. Governors do not know enough about pupils' progress for them to ask searching questions of school leaders, so that they can hold the school fully to account for raising standards.
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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	117313
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	412411

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 of pupils on the school roll	235
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Eric McLaughlin
Headteacher	Mrs Sue Thompson
Date of previous school inspection	24 March 2009
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