

Richmond Avenue Primary and Nursery School

Richmond Avenue, Shoeburyness, Southend-on-Sea, SS3 9LG

Inspection dates 19–20 June 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	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

- Too few pupils consistently make more than expected progress, particularly in mathematics and there are limited opportunities for the development of literacy and numeracy skills across the curriculum.
- The systems designed to track pupils' progress are not always used to identify and support quickly enough the pupils who need extra help, including the more-able pupils.
- There are too many classes where teaching is not yet consistently good. Teachers do not always match the work to pupils' ability, check pupils' understanding, use questioning or make the best use of teaching assistants.
- Performance targets for teachers are not reviewed regularly and do not address specific areas of weakness in teaching.
- Subject leaders are not fully involved in monitoring pupils' progress and supporting in classrooms, and there are insufficient opportunities for teachers to share good practice.
- Leaders and governors have not yet ensured enough improvement in the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement.

The school has the following strengths

- The headteacher is taking action to tackle underachievement so that the school is on a well-planned journey of improvement.
- Standards are improving and there is evidence of an increasing amount of good progress across the school this year.
- There have been considerable improvements in the behaviour and attendance of pupils. The behaviour of pupils is good and they feel safe and secure in the school.
- Pupils benefit from a wide range of outside visits and out-of-school activities.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 17 lessons, of which four were joint observations with the headteacher and deputy headteacher.
- Discussions were held with the headteacher, the Chair of the Governing Body, one additional governor, the Director of Education from the local authority, senior leaders, staff and groups of pupils.
- Inspectors took account of the 45 responses to the Parent View online questionnaire and the 37 responses from the staff questionnaire distributed for the inspection.
- Inspectors examined a range of evidence, including the school’s self-evaluation form, the school development plan, the system to track pupils’ progress, and records relating to behaviour and attendance. They also looked at records of lesson observations by senior staff, performance management information, safeguarding documentation and a sample of pupils’ work.

Inspection team

Stephen Walker, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Stefan Roos

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Full report

Information about this school

- The school is larger than the average-sized primary school and is situated in the eastern part of Southend-on-Sea.
- The majority of pupils are from White British backgrounds and live within the immediate locality.
- The school is housed in the original Victorian infant and junior school buildings which have been modified and refurbished.
- A larger-than-average proportion of the pupils are known to be eligible for the pupil premium, which provides additional funding for children in local authority care, pupils with a parent in the armed forces and pupils known to be eligible for free school meals.
- The proportion of pupils supported through school action is well above average. So, too, is the proportion supported at school action plus or assessed with a statement of special educational needs. Many of these pupils have moderate learning difficulties or social, emotional and behavioural problems.
- A small number of pupils attend the local pupil referral unit and the Harbour Centre on a part-time basis.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- The school has gained National Healthy Schools status.
- The headteacher has been in post since September 2011 and the new Chair of the Governing Body was appointed in September 2012.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that all teaching is good or better by making sure that all teachers :
 - plan and adjust work in lessons so that is at the right level for all pupils
 - check pupils' progress during lessons to ensure that they understand the work and how to complete the tasks
 - use questioning more effectively to engage pupils, confirm their understanding and challenge them in their learning
 - use teaching assistants more effectively to support pupils' learning within the classroom and when working with small groups of pupils.
- Sustain the recent improvements in pupils' progress and continue to raise the attainment of pupils across the school in English and mathematics by:
 - providing effective support for all pupils at risk of underachieving and not making the progress they should
 - increasing pupils' progress and confidence in reading and writing, and in understanding and applying their numeracy skills in mathematical calculations
 - ensuring that strategies are in place to support the more-able pupils to achieve the higher levels
 - providing more opportunities to develop literacy and numeracy skills across all subject areas.
- Improve the effectiveness of leaders and governors by ensuring that:
 - teachers' performance targets address specific areas for improvement in teaching and are

formally reviewed on a more regular basis

- there are more opportunities for improving teaching through coaching and sharing good practice
 - subject leaders are more involved in monitoring pupils' progress across the school and providing support in classrooms to improve the quality of teaching
 - leaders monitor the effectiveness of key actions and initiatives to ensure they are quickly leading to improvements in teaching and achievement.
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Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils requires improvement

- Pupils' achievement requires improvement because their progress is not consistently good and they have not attained as well as might be expected for the last three years, particularly in mathematics. Although there are clear signs of better progress this year, this has been insufficient to compensate for past underachievement or to demonstrate sustained good progress.
- Although the majority of pupils make the expected progress from their low starting points, too few have made more than expected progress. Few pupils are gaining the higher levels in English and mathematics. Those pupils who start Key Stage 2 with higher attainment levels make slower progress than the other pupils.
- Rates of progress vary between classes and between boys and girls. This variability means that some pupils' skills and confidence in reading and writing are not being consistently developed across the school. Similarly, key skills in numeracy are sometimes weak and some pupils have difficulties with calculations in their mathematics work. Pupils are generally making better progress in reading this year, although this was not the case in the past.
- The school is making greater use of the systems for tracking pupils' progress and providing better support for underachieving pupils. However, some teachers still do not identify underachieving pupils quickly enough, or give them fully effective additional support.
- Most disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make progress in line with their peers. A small number of pupils supported at school action plus underachieved last year due to particular problems related to challenging behaviour. More pupils are making good progress this year due to the effective work from other adults which help them overcome barriers to learning.
- There are clear signs of better progress across the school this year, which reflect the school's drive to raise achievement and make up for some underachievement in the past. Recent testing in Year 6 suggests that over 80% of pupils are on track to gain at least level 4 in English and mathematics, which would represent good progress from their Key Stage 1 starting points.
- Similarly, progress records for the Nursery and Reception classes show that children are presently making good progress. Structured activities and the good use of the inside and outside resources are having a positive impact on children's personal development, as well as encouraging number and language skills.
- Additional funding from the pupil premium is allocated effectively to provide pupils with extra help from teaching assistants in reading, writing and mathematics. The gap between the achievement of pupils eligible for the pupil premium and the other pupils is narrowing although eligible pupils currently in the school are about two terms behind their classmates in English and mathematics.
- The school has been active in improving pupils' progress in mathematics. There is now a more structured course in Key Stage 1 which emphasises the development of key skills in numeracy. All pupils benefit from an additional numeracy lesson every day and there is a time set aside for mental mathematics. Single gender groups in Year 6 are effectively addressing the previous underachievement of some girls.

- Reading is now a key priority and pupils are being encouraged to read at home and in school each day. The school is improving the quality of writing through teachers providing pupils with plans to help them structure their writing. The emphasis on speaking and listening as well as encouraging all pupils to answer questions is supporting the improvement in both their language and writing skills.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- Although there have been improvements in teaching, particularly over the last year, it varies too much across the school and there are still too many lessons which require improvement.
- Teachers do not always make sure that the planned activities and instructions are set at the right level for all ability groups. Some pupils are not challenged enough because the work in lessons is sometimes too easy for them, while others are held back in their learning because the work is too hard and they need more guidance and support.
- Teachers insufficiently explain what is expected of pupils before asking them to complete their tasks or check their progress during the lesson to ensure that they have understood the work. Consequently some pupils are slow to start on written work or get stuck because they need additional help.
- Not enough teachers use questioning well to engage pupils in their learning and to check their understanding. Too many teachers are missing the opportunity to use questioning to challenge the pupils and extend their thinking.
- Not all teachers use teaching assistants effectively to support a wider range of pupils in the classroom. Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs benefit from the extra support they receive in and out of class, but sometimes they are given too much help and they become too reliant on the teaching assistants. There are other pupils in the classes who also need additional support with their work.
- There are clear indications of improvements in teaching across the school. In lessons where pupils make good progress, teachers prepare a range of well planned activities which fully engage the pupils and allow them to take some responsibility for their own learning. For example, Year 6 pupils made good progress when planning for their written assignment on Aztecs. The teacher skilfully used questioning to check their understanding and also to encourage pupils to apply and extend their knowledge.
- There is a positive atmosphere for learning in most classes and pupils want to do well in their work. Teachers have addressed the inconsistency of marking which was identified by the new leadership. There are now some good examples of marking, with clear guidance to pupils on how to improve their work. Imaginative displays in classrooms also provide opportunities to celebrate pupils' work.

The behaviour and safety of pupils

are good

- The large majority of pupils behave well in lessons and around the school, and this contributes to a calm and orderly environment. Parents, carers and pupils confirm that behaviour has improved significantly since the appointment of the new headteacher. There are now clear expectations of behaviour and consistent systems to deal with any misbehaviour.

- Pupils are generally polite and courteous to staff and to each other. They generally respond well to teachers' good use of praise and encouragement to promote high standards of behaviour. Pupils are developing their skills in managing their own behaviour although there remains the need for a high level of supervision and support at break and lunchtime. The 'Forest School Area' and 'Cabin' are used well to support pupils who have had problems with behaviour or coping in the main playground.
- The inspectors found that pupils who display challenging behaviour are managed well. Pupils confirmed that disruptions are now rare and that any misbehaviour is dealt with appropriately by the teachers and other adults. Pupils who attend off-site provision on a part-time basis make good progress with improving their behaviour.
- Senior pupils have opportunities to support the younger pupils by acting as 'playground buddies' and many pupils are involved in fundraising and out-of-school activities. The regular assemblies greatly support the positive atmosphere and sense of community in the school.
- Bullying of any kind is rare in the school although pupils can use the 'worry box' should any problem occur. Pupils say that staff deal quickly and effectively with any unkind behaviour, such as name-calling or teasing. Pupils are aware of the different forms of possible bullying, such as cyber-bullying and prejudice-based bullying related to sex, gender, race and disability.
- The school makes every effort to ensure pupils feel safe and secure. They have a good awareness of issues relating to safety and know how to keep themselves safe in a variety of situations such as using the internet, crossing the road and talking with strangers. The National Healthy Schools status reflects the emphasis the school places on healthy eating and lifestyles. Older pupils are aware of the dangers of smoking, alcohol and drugs.
- There has been a marked improvement in attendance and a reduction in persistent absence. The school is particularly active in following up all absences. Attendance is now in line with the national average and most pupils enjoy coming to the school.

The leadership and management

requires improvement

- Although there are clear signs that this is becoming a better school, there is still work to do in consolidating the recent improvements in pupils' progress and eliminating teaching which requires improvement.
 - The headteacher is providing strong leadership which has already brought improvement in some respects, but this has yet to bring sustained improvement in the quality of teaching or pupils' progress.
 - Senior leaders are carrying out more regular lesson observations which a stronger focus on pupils' progress. However, there has been insufficient analysis of the areas where teachers require professional support so that coaching can be put in place. The school is not encouraging enough sharing of good practice from within and beyond the school.
 - Subject leaders have taken on more responsibility within the school and are now becoming more involved in whole school improvement than in the past by providing guidance to teachers. However, they are not yet fully involved in monitoring pupils' progress across the school or
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providing support in classrooms to improve the quality of teaching.

- The new system of performance management ensures that teachers are more accountable for the progress of their pupils and all salary progression is now linked to pupil progress and the quality of teaching. However, teachers' performance targets do not address specific areas for improvement in teaching and are not formally reviewed on a regular basis.
- The curriculum now has a greater focus on English and mathematics, but literacy and numeracy skills are insufficiently developed across all subject areas. A wide range of outside visits and out-of-school activities increase pupils' enjoyment and experience of school. The range of experiences contributes well to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- The local authority has worked closely with the headteacher and governors to implement a plan for improvement. It has been active in providing training and support for leaders so that the school has been able to address some of the previous weaknesses in teaching and pupils' progress.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body has a good awareness of the school's strengths and areas for improvement. It has been active in eliminating the budget deficit and addressing inadequate teaching. Its members are increasingly involved in monitoring progress and holding leaders and staff to account, although this was not always the case in the past. The headteacher ensures that governors have a good understanding about the quality of teaching and about pupils' achievement in relation to other similar schools. This allows them to make confident decisions on salary progression. They make sure that the school's procedures for safeguarding meet current national requirements. Governors have effectively overseen the use of the pupil premium funding and ensured that it is spent only on supporting eligible pupils. They are developing their roles and are highly aware of the need to monitor the effectiveness of key actions and initiatives to ensure they are quickly leading to improvements in teaching and achievement.

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	133957
Local authority	Southend-on-Sea
Inspection number	411856

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	365
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Graham Reeder
Headteacher	Dawn Dack
Date of previous school inspection	18 November 2008
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