

# R A Butler Junior School

South Road, Saffron Walden, CB11 3DG

**Inspection dates** 2–3 July 2013

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected	
	This inspection:	<b>Good</b>	<b>2</b>
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a good school.

- Pupils make good progress overall, and some pupils make outstanding progress in reading.
- Year 6 attainment is significantly above average in English and mathematics.
- Teaching is good with some that is outstanding. Teachers have strong subject knowledge, and they question pupils effectively so that they learn well.
- Behaviour is good and pupils have positive attitudes to learning. Pupils are eager to come to school and their above average attendance and good punctuality reflects this.
- Pupils are motivated by exciting topics in lessons, and an excellent range of clubs and activities further enrich learning.
- Despite extensive building work, and the absence of an executive headteacher, leaders at all levels have stayed focused on the pursuit of excellence, and this has brought about improvements in teaching and achievement, particularly in writing and mathematics.
- Governors are effective because they have high expectations, are ambitious for the school, and successfully drive improvement.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good and the promotion of these aspects is a key strength of the school. Pupils receive high quality care from, for example, the school counsellor and learning mentor.

### It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Teaching in some year groups is better than in others. Pupils make better progress overall in Years 3 and 6 than they do in Years 4 and 5.
- Teachers' written comments on pupils' work do not always include sufficient detail to show pupils exactly what they must do to improve their work.
- Sometimes teachers do not check during lessons how well pupils understand what is being taught.
- Although progress in writing has improved over the last year, it is not as good as progress in reading. Pupils do not get enough opportunities across all subjects to talk about what they are going to write, and practise their writing skills in all subjects taught.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 28 lessons or part lessons. Ten lessons were observed jointly with senior and other leaders.
- Meetings were held with groups of pupils, governors, staff, and school improvement advisors.
- Inspectors looked at a range of evidence, including the school's documents on self-evaluation and safeguarding. They observed the school's work, looked at pupils' books and the tracking system used to monitor pupils' progress.
- Inspectors considered 88 responses to the online parent questionnaire (Parent View), two letters received from parents, and the 35 questionnaire responses completed by staff.

## Inspection team

Miranda Perry, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Concetta Caruana	Additional Inspector
David Gutmann	Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- R A Butler Junior School converted to become an academy in November 2010 as part of a trust arrangement along with R A Butler Infants School. When the predecessor school R A Butler Junior School was last inspected by Ofsted, its overall effectiveness was judged outstanding. The academy is located in Essex. It is larger than the average primary school.
- RA Butler Junior and Infants share a single governing body and an executive headteacher. There has been no executive headteacher in post since October 2012 and the school has been led by an acting headteacher.
- A well-below-average proportion of pupils are eligible for the pupil premium, which provides additional funding for children that are looked after, pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and the children of families in the armed forces.
- Most pupils are White British, with English as their first language. Very few pupils speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of pupils supported through school action is below average, as is the proportion supported through school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs.
- The academy meets the government's floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in English and mathematics.
- The school has undergone significant building work over the last year.
- Some classes are made up of mixed year groups.

### What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching further so that more is outstanding in every year group by ensuring that:
  - all teachers' comments on pupils' work make it clear what must be improved
  - all teachers make sure that they check pupils' understanding during the lesson and change tasks and activities if necessary to extend learning
  - pupils in Years 4 and 5 make the same progress as pupils in other years.
- Improve achievement in writing by making sure that pupils are given opportunities:
  - to write at length in every year group, across all subjects, to further improve pupils' writing skills
  - to discuss their ideas before they write them down.

## Inspection judgements

### The achievement of pupils is good

- The majority of pupils enter the school with skills and knowledge that are above those expected nationally in English and mathematics. By the end of Key Stage 2 pupils reach standards in English and mathematics that are significantly above the national average. Pupils' achievement is good over time and in most lessons.
- Academy data, based on rigorous assessment, shows that the proportions of pupils making expected and more than expected progress are higher this academic year than in 2012, particularly in writing and mathematics. This is because more middle and higher ability pupils are making better than expected progress in writing and mathematics, than in 2012.
- In 2013, more pupils in Year 6 are set to gain the higher National Curriculum level 6 in English and mathematics than was the case in 2012. More-able Year 6 pupils think that the school challenges them well. 'They take the glass ceiling away from us,' one more able boy said.
- Pupils' achievements in a range of other subjects, such as music and art, are good. This is because pupils are encouraged to celebrate their progress in these subjects; they are inspired by the enthusiasm of their teachers and therefore make good gains in learning.
- Pupils' achievement in reading, writing and mathematics is good; however it is better in Years 3 and 6 than in Years 4 and 5. These gaps between the progress of different year groups are closing, because the school has identified the particular pupils who are underachieving, for example, girls in mathematics in Year 5. Leaders implemented an effective improvement programme, tailored to girls' particular needs. The actions taken successfully accelerated girls' progress in mathematics.
- Some pupils make outstanding progress in reading, particularly in Years 3 and 6. This is because pupils in Year 3 who are at risk of underachieving in reading are taught extremely well in small focused groups, and pupils in Year 6 have felt really inspired by the types of texts that they have read at school this year.
- Disabled pupils and pupils who have special educational needs achieve well in all subjects. This is because staff are highly knowledgeable about what pupils must do to achieve success and use effective strategies to ensure that individuals overcome their difficulties. The support provided is well targeted and is effective in meeting individuals' specific needs and abilities.
- The school has been very effective in reducing the attainment gap for pupils eligible for free school meals. School data indicates that in 2012, the attainment of these pupils in Year 6 was equal to that of other pupils in school in both English and mathematics. The attainment of free school meals pupils was above similar pupils nationally in both subjects. Their current attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics is good, and similar to their peers. Good use is made of the extra pupil premium funds. For example, the school motivates pupils by developing their individual interests, through providing music tuition and funding theatre visits.
- Pupils' achievement in writing has improved over the last year, primarily because individuals have been set clear, challenging writing targets that pupils have achieved. However, pupils' writing is not yet as good as their reading. They are not given the same opportunities to write in all subjects, as they are to read. Pupils regularly discuss what they have read, but not what

they are going to write, and how they are going to write it.

- Pupils' achievement in mathematics has improved. Pupils are making good gains in their learning because the school has identified gaps in pupils' understanding and has organised effective, targeted teaching to close learning gaps.

### **The quality of teaching** is good

- Teachers use methods and choose themes and activities which pupils find exciting. In an outstanding Year 6 mathematics lesson, pupils were asked to explore how famous artists had used number rules to influence their paintings. Pupils were so motivated that they could not stop talking about their learning when they had left the class. One pupil said, 'These lessons never end how you think they will, and that's what is exciting about them.'
- Pupils are shown examples of excellent work so that they understand how high the school's expectations of them are. For example, pupils analysed a letter from Roald Dahl's granddaughter, in an outstanding Year 3 English lesson, to prepare them for writing a high quality letter in response.
- Pupils learn well because they have good relationships with their teachers and want to work hard for them. Pupils in a Year 4 English lesson were delighted when the teacher asked them to discuss how her favourite animal, the hedgehog, could have got its spikes and they challenged themselves to devise a theory about how their own favourite animal got their features.
- Pupils are taught to read very well. The teaching of letters and sounds is very effective and pupils are encouraged to read widely and regularly in all subjects. Displays are regularly updated and include extracts to read from exemplary work completed by the pupils themselves.
- The school has employed an extra teacher of mathematics so that teaching groups are smaller and work is better matched to pupils' abilities, particularly for middle and higher ability pupils. Consequently, the progress of both groups of pupils in mathematics has increased, leading to improved outcomes in the subject.
- Teachers' deepen pupils' knowledge in mathematics because they plan lessons that are concerned with 'real life' experience. In a Year 6 lesson, pupils had to work out the right shape and number of tiles to cover their teacher's patio. One pupil said, 'If I am actually going to build this, I have to work out what the actual problem is.'
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs are taught well. Every class is well resourced with a high number of additional adults who are deployed effectively. Adult support is well targeted and ensures pupils achieve well.
- In some lessons, pupils think that marking is good at telling them what must be improved. This is not the case in all lessons, because sometimes pupils are not clear what their next learning steps are.
- Sometimes, teachers do not check, until the end of the lesson, whether pupils have understood the learning. As a result, teachers cannot always address pupils' misunderstandings as they occur.

**The behaviour and safety of pupils are good**

- The school is a calm, friendly and welcoming place. Pupils behave well in lessons and are very willing to learn. They are particularly good at working with each other in groups or pairs, and automatically help each other if a classmate is stuck.
- Attendance is above average and has been since the academy was set up. The school applies rigorous systems and has very high expectations for attendance. Punctuality is very good and it is carefully monitored, so any emerging patterns of poor punctuality are followed up promptly.
- An indication of the pupils' good behaviour is that no pupil has been temporarily or permanently excluded since the academy opened and no racist incidents have been reported.
- Pupils feel safe and well cared for and really appreciate the support that they receive from the counsellor and learning mentor. They have a good understanding of the different forms of bullying and say that, although there is some bullying, it is always dealt with quickly and effectively. They know how to stay safe in situations beyond the school, including when using the internet. The majority of parents agree that the school keeps their children safe.
- The school is successful at bringing about improvements for individuals who find it difficult to behave well. The school works well with parents to help manage individual's behaviour more effectively in school and at home, and staff have a good understanding of how difficulties at home impact on pupils' behaviour in school.
- Very occasionally, when teachers have not checked whether pupils understand the lesson, the pupils' concentration wanes, but their behaviour is never less than good.

**The leadership and management are good**

- The acting headteacher and senior leaders have rightly focused on improving teaching and achievement and outcomes in writing and mathematics, despite the absence of an executive headteacher and significant building work. They have successfully driven improvement over the last 12 months and there is good capacity to improve further. Teaching has improved because of high expectations, communicated through an extensive programme of monitoring and lesson observations, that ensures school guidance is suitably embedded.
- Teachers regularly observe each other's lessons to inform them how to make their teaching better. The agenda for staff meetings concentrates on the improvement of teaching and learning, and leaders will often model best practice in front of the whole staff. This sets the example, for other teachers to follow. The adoption of good practice has had a positive impact on improving teachers' skills.
- Newly qualified teachers, and staff who are training to become teachers, are well supported by leaders at all levels. They are given opportunities to plan and teach jointly with experienced staff, so their teaching improves rapidly.
- School development plans are refined in the light of identified weaknesses. They are effective because actions build on existing good practice. Focused planning based on accurate self-evaluation has helped to bring about improvements in progress over the last year, particularly in writing and mathematics.
- Leaders meet with staff on a termly basis to check pupils' progress. They identify pupils at risk of

underachievement, and plan actions to accelerate individuals' progress. Staff describe this as an effective strategy because they feel responsible for the achievement of every pupil that they teach.

- The school is organised in an academy trust with R A Butler Infants School. The trust employs two advisors to help the acting headteacher to continue to drive school improvement. The advisory input has been effective in improving teaching and learning, and leaders' leadership and management skills.
- The quality of the curriculum provided is an important strength. The activities provided are stimulating and interesting and provision makes a good contribution to pupils' personal development. The school follows the International Primary Curriculum and pupils appreciate lessons which are creative. One boy came up to an inspector in the playground and said, 'We are doing Pandora's box all day today. We are writing to the gods. I love it.'
- The school is planning to introduce a new marking policy to bring about greater consistency in the use of teacher comments to identify how pupils can improve their work. A new literacy policy is to be adopted to ensure that there are more opportunities for pupils to write, and discuss their ideas for writing, across the curriculum.
- The school promotes equality of opportunity well and discrimination is not tolerated. The school uses its full range of out-of school activities to try and find something that will interest every pupil. It has set up a gardening club which is run by older pupils who are at risk of underachievement, to maintain their engagement with learning and to improve their social skills.
- **The governance of the school:**
  - Governors are effective in driving improvement. They bring experience to their role and benefit from the expertise available through the single governance arrangements of the academy trust. They are well trained and have a clear view about the quality of teaching in the school, what needs to improve, and understand the performance data that tells them about pupils' progress. They have recently focused on improving the quality of their questioning of senior leaders, so that they better hold them to account. Governors ensure that all aspects of safeguarding are well managed and that pupil premium funds are used effectively for eligible pupils. The staff appraisal system is robust and the objectives set for individuals have been instrumental in improving teaching. Teachers' pay and performance are clearly linked.

## 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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	136328
<b>Local authority</b>	Essex
<b>Inspection number</b>	411808

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Junior
<b>School category</b>	Academy
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	7–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	305
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Steve Morgan
<b>Headteacher</b>	James Puxley
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
<b>Telephone number</b>	01799 523651
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