

Ramsey Community Junior School

Station Road, Ramsey, Huntingdon, PE26 1JA

Inspection dates 4–5 July 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	Inadequate	4
Achievement of pupils		Inadequate	4
Quality of teaching		Inadequate	4
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Leadership and management		Inadequate	4

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires special measures.

- Pupils' attainment in English and mathematics by the time they leave the school in Year 6 is consistently below average.
- Not enough pupils, including those who need extra help, make the progress that is expected in Key Stage 2. As a result, their skills in reading, writing and mathematics are insufficiently developed to prepare them for the next stage in their education.
- Too much teaching is inadequate. Teachers do not use information about what pupils already know and can do to plan tasks for them that will move their learning onto the next level, particularly those pupils that are the most able.
- Teachers' lesson introductions and explanations are too long, limiting the time pupils have to get on with their own work. The questions they ask pupils do not help them enough to think and find things out for themselves.
- There is some low-level disruption in lessons where teachers fail to engage pupils' interest.
- Teachers' marking of pupils' work does not always help them to understand what they have done well and what they need to do to improve their work. Pupils are rarely given time to respond to teachers' comments.
- Opportunities for pupils to use their English and mathematics skills when learning about other subjects are limited. Activities do not always engage pupils' interests.
- Until recently, leaders have not tackled weaknesses in teaching to ensure that pupils make the progress of which they are capable. Staff have not been held accountable for pupils' slow progress.
- The skills of those in charge of leading subjects have not been developed sufficiently well for them to drive improvement.
- Not all parents and carers feel that they get sufficient information about how well their children are doing.

The school has the following strengths

- Pupils feel safe and well cared for at school. Adults in the 'nurture group' provide effective support to pupils in developing their wellbeing.
- Pupils sing enthusiastically, with clear enjoyment in music lessons and assemblies.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 15 lessons or parts of lessons taught by eight teachers, and two assemblies. They observed two lessons jointly with the headteacher.
- Meetings were held with senior leaders, subject leaders, staff, and members of the governing body. In addition, the lead inspector had a discussion with a representative from the local authority.
- Inspectors talked with pupils, listened to them read and observed them at play during break and lunch times.
- The school’s safeguarding policies, improvement plans, notes from meetings of the governing body and records of pupils’ behaviour were reviewed. Inspectors also looked at the work pupils were doing in their books, and at records of their progress.
- Inspectors took account of the 43 responses to the online parent questionnaire (Parent View), and the 26 replies to the staff questionnaire. Inspectors also met with parents and carers and sought their views at the start of the school day as they brought their children to school.

Inspection team

Sarah Warboys, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Jacqueline Bell-Cook

Additional Inspector

Full report

In accordance with the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires special measures because it is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school.

Information about this school

- Ramsey Community Junior School is smaller than the average-sized junior school.
- Most pupils are White British. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds is average. Very few pupils speak English as an additional language.
- An above-average proportion of the pupils are eligible for the pupil premium, which provides additional funding to the school. The funding is based on the number of children at the school in local authority care and those known to be eligible for free school meals.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs who are supported through school action is average. The percentage supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is above average.
- 'The Foxes' out-of-school and holiday club operates on the school site and is inspected separately.
- The executive headteacher was appointed on a secondment of one term from April 2013. She is also headteacher of Ramsey Spinning Infant School.
- The school does not meet the government's current floor standards, which sets the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching to good or better by ensuring that all staff:
 - use assessment information effectively to set work for pupils that will move their learning to the next level
 - give pupils time to work on tasks and activities by themselves and in groups
 - ask pupils searching questions that help to develop their understanding and deepen their thinking.
- Improve the quality and consistency of marking by ensuring that teachers:
 - give pupils clear guidance when marking their work that lets them know what they have done well and what they need to do to improve
 - increase opportunities for pupils to respond to teachers' comments so they can learn from their mistakes
 - learn from and adopt the most effective marking that exists in the school.
- Raise pupils' attainment and accelerate their progress in reading, writing and mathematics by ensuring that:
 - teaching improves and secures consistently good progress year-on-year
 - teachers plan interesting activities that inspire pupils to learn and to use their reading, writing and mathematical skills when learning in subjects.

- Increase leadership capacity and the rate at which the school improves by:
 - ensuring that leaders at all levels, including the governing body, rigorously maintain the focus on improving teaching and check the effectiveness of their actions on pupils' achievement
 - developing the role of those who lead subjects in driving improvement across the school
 - establishing effective methods to keep parents and carers informed about how well their children are doing.

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

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

is inadequate

- Pupils join the school with the skills and abilities that are typical for their age. Attainment at the end of Year 6 has been below average since 2009 and fell sharply in 2012. In that year, pupils left the school a year behind pupils nationally. There has been consistent underachievement in Key Stage 2.
- Not enough Year 6 pupils in 2012 made the progress expected of them in reading, writing and mathematics. The proportion of pupils reaching the expected levels in English and mathematics was lower than that found nationally. Pupils did not make adequate progress in Years 3 to 5, leaving too much for pupils to learn and catch up in Year 6.
- Current assessment information shows that the Year 6 pupils who took the national tests in 2013 are set to reach levels that are closer to national averages than they were in the previous year, particularly in English. Nevertheless, these pupils joined the school with above-average skills and, therefore, have made inadequate progress during their time at Ramsey Junior, especially in writing and mathematics.
- Of the pupils currently at the school, the progress they are making is uneven. Pupils in Year 3 have made inadequate progress in reading, writing and mathematics. Those in Year 4 have not made enough progress in writing. Similarly, in Year 5, pupils' progress in mathematics is inadequate. However, Year 6 pupils progress at a faster rate because of better teaching.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make inadequate progress from their varied starting points. Some make better progress in one-to-one tuition sessions and when working in small groups, but the tasks that teachers set for them in lessons are not matched closely enough to their needs to ensure that they address specific gaps in their knowledge and skills.
- Extra funding in the form of the pupil premium has not been allocated appropriately to provide additional support for eligible pupils. Eligible pupils in Year 6 in 2012 were, on average, more than two terms behind their classmates in English and around six months behind in mathematics. Attainment gaps in 2013 are similar. The executive headteacher has ensured that plans are now in place to provide the extra help these pupils need.
- Adults in the Nurture Group, which provides for pupils with specific learning needs, are effective in building pupils' self-esteem and self-confidence. Positive relationships provide an emotionally safe environment in which pupils whose circumstances make them vulnerable can develop their skills of communication. Adults help these pupils to manage their feelings and this helps them to be ready to learn.

The quality of teaching

is inadequate

- Teaching over time has led to underachievement for most groups of pupils. Too much teaching is not good enough to ensure that pupils make the progress they should. Teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve are too low and the pace of learning is slow.
- Typically, in lessons where pupils make inadequate progress, teachers do not use the information they have about what pupils already know and can do to plan activities for pupils that will help to move their learning to the next level, particularly for those that are more able.

Too often, the work that is set does not sufficiently match pupils' different needs and ability levels.

- Teachers' lesson introductions and their explanations are too long, restricting the time that pupils have to get on with their own work, limiting learning. The questions adults ask pupils do not challenge their understanding and encourage them to think things through for themselves.
- The quality of teachers' marking of pupils' work varies. Most work in pupils' books is marked, but marking does not always help pupils to make better progress. Good examples give pupils clear guidance about what they have done well and what they need to do to improve. Although sometimes pupils are given tasks to do, examples to follow or questions to answer, rarely are they given the chance to respond so that they can improve their skills.
- Where teaching is most effective, teachers are clear about what they want pupils to learn. The work set matches pupils' needs and interests, and inspires them. In Year 4, for example, the teacher's use of computer technology engaged pupils and helped to maintain their interest. Pupils made good progress in being able to improve their writing by editing short, simple sentences to make them longer and more complex, using a range of connectives and adding imaginative adverbs.
- In all lessons observed, good relationships were evident. Pupils were praised and encouraged for their efforts. Teachers used 'talk partners' effectively to help pupils share and clarify their thinking. Such shared working enables pupils to practise their speaking and listening skills.
- Teaching in Year 6 was not observed directly during the inspection because pupils were making visits to their secondary schools. However, work in pupils' books and tracking of their progress shows that these pupils are making progress at a faster rate than in other year groups.

The behaviour and safety of pupils

requires improvement

- Where teaching is inadequate or requires improvement, pupils lose concentration; their interest wanes and a few pupils demonstrate low-level disruptive behaviour.
 - Attendance rates have fluctuated in recent years. Attendance is currently slightly below average. The executive headteacher is taking appropriate and determined action, working closely with families, to reduce the number of sessions missed by pupils' absence from school.
 - Pupils say that they feel safe at school. They know about different kinds of bullying. Some said that instances of bullying, mostly name-calling, worry them. They are, however, confident that when they report their concerns to staff, they are taken seriously and feel supported. They have a sound knowledge and understanding of how to keep safe when using the internet.
 - Pupils, staff, parents and carers all expressed positive views about behaviour. Pupils have a good understanding of the school's 'traffic light' systems for managing behaviour and say that it works well. Around the school, pupils are polite and courteous to each other. They understand that some pupils may need extra help to manage their behaviour and are keen to help them do so when they are able.
 - Despite often being passive learners and listening to adults for too long, the majority of pupils are patient, behave well and show positive attitudes to learning. Where teaching is good, pupils are keen to take a full part in lessons and to share their achievements with each other. On these
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occasions, pupils work hard and, consequently, make good progress.

The leadership and management are inadequate

- Until recently, leaders have not taken effective steps to tackle pupils' underachievement. Too many pupils are not adequately prepared for the next stage in their education because of weak teaching over time.
 - Those who lead improvements in English and mathematics have received too little training and time to develop their skills because they have needed to focus on raising pupils' achievement in Year 6.
 - Parents and carers who responded to the online questionnaire and who spoke to inspectors rightly expressed their concerns about teaching and progress. Just under half feel that they do not receive enough information about how well their children are doing.
 - Although the school offers its pupils a range of subjects, including visits and visitors to enrich learning themes, activities planned for pupils do not always inspire and enthuse them to make the best possible progress they could. Opportunities are missed for pupils to use and apply their reading and writing skills and their understanding of mathematics when learning in other subjects.
 - The executive headteacher has identified what is going well and what needs to improve. She has very quickly set about improving teaching. The appraisal process that links pupils' progress to teacher's pay has not been rigorous enough to hold teachers to account, but the executive headteacher has raised expectations of staff. She is meeting more frequently with them to discuss the progress their pupils are making to improve equal opportunities and to begin to tackle any form of discrimination.
 - Senior leaders and other staff are behind the executive headteacher's vision to drive improvement. Parents and carers have expressed confidence in her ability to move the school forward, but she has only been in post for a short time. Although prompt action has been taken to improve teaching and to develop the skills of the subject leaders, it is too early to assess the effectiveness of these actions on pupils' achievement.
 - Pupils sing well, with great enjoyment and enthusiasm, especially the school's own song. Community partnerships provide pupils with opportunities to participate in sport, art and cultural events, for example 'Molly' dancing and a Year 5 production of *Wind in the Willows*. Such activities contribute to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
 - The local authority has provided extensive support to improve leadership and teaching. While its help has secured better leadership for the school, support for teaching has sometimes led to conflicting advice for teachers, not helped by changes to staffing. Consequently, the local authority's support for improving teaching has been limited.
 - The school may not appoint newly qualified teachers.
 - Safeguarding arrangements meet requirements.
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■ **The governance of the school:**

- Governors have not tackled weaknesses in leadership, teaching and pupils' progress until recently. They have a growing understanding of how pupils' achievement compares to all schools nationally; that pupils' progress is inadequate and of the urgent need to maintain a strong focus on teaching in order to secure better outcomes for pupils. Governors have taken effective steps to secure the secondment of the executive headteacher. They are benefiting from training to make governance more effective, including ensuring that plans to spend the pupil premium is targeted on those for whom it is intended. Governors are working closely with the executive headteacher to check on the management of teaching to be able to hold staff more to account for pupils' achievement. Governors have yet to establish a direct link between teachers' pay and the progress their pupils make.
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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	110686
Local authority	Cambridgeshire
Inspection number	412691

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	206
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Ellen Willis
Headteacher	Patsy Peres (Executive Headteacher)
Date of previous school inspection	9 December 2009
Telephone number	01487 812500
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