

Riddings Junior School

Church Street, Riddings, Alfreton, DE55 4BW

Inspection dates

3–4 December 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	Requires improvement	3
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Requires improvement	3
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 make good progress or achieve well. Not enough pupils achieve the higher levels, especially in mathematics. The gap between the attainment of pupils eligible for the pupil premium and their classmates is too wide.
- Pupils attain broadly average levels in reading, writing, and mathematics but standards are not rising sufficiently quickly.
- Pupils do not regularly write at length to consolidate their spelling and grammatical skills or have well-planned and regular opportunities to strengthen their literacy and numeracy skills in other subjects.
- Teaching requires improvement. Teachers' expectations of pupils' work are not always high enough.
- Work is sometimes too easy or too hard for pupils and does not identify their strengths and needs.
- Teachers' marking and the targets set for pupils to improve their work are not always used effectively to raise standards.
- Attendance is below average and the proportion of pupils who are persistently absent from school is above average.
- Leadership and management require improvement. Although the school is improving, leaders and managers at all levels, including governors, are not checking achievement or teaching quality thoroughly or regularly enough.
- Teachers' targets do not focus sufficiently on raising achievement.

The school has the following strengths

- Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs make good progress.
- Teaching assistants provide effective support to pupils with specific learning and behavioural needs.
- Pupils feel safe in school and work and play happily together.
- The school promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding well.
- Parents are very supportive of the school and increasingly work with the staff in order to support their children's learning.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed 15 lessons, two of which were observed jointly with the headteacher.
- The inspectors spoke with many pupils during lessons and break times. They listened to pupils read, watched the learning of pupils in intervention groups and attended an assembly. One inspector talked with parents at the start of the school day.
- One inspector met formally with a group of pupils to find out their views about their school and their learning.
- The inspectors also held meetings with the senior leadership team, subject leaders, members of the governing body and a representative of the local authority.
- They looked at a wide range of documentation, including information about the achievement of all pupils, improvement planning, pupils' work, and policies to safeguard them, such as attendance and behaviour.
- In carrying out the inspection, the inspectors took into account the three responses made by staff to the questionnaire. An insufficient number of parents responded to the online questionnaire for them to be recorded, so the inspection team considered the school's own questionnaire to parents from earlier this year.

Inspection team

Lynne Blakelock, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Janet Bird

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is smaller than other schools of its type.
- Most pupils are of White British heritage and all speak English as their first language.
- The proportion of students supported through the pupil premium (additional funding for looked-after children and those known to be eligible for free school meals) is above average.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported through school action is above average. The proportion supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the proportion of consistently good and better teaching so that more pupils make accelerated progress by ensuring that all teachers:
 - set suitably challenging tasks for all ability groups so that all pupils, but especially those supported through additional funding, make faster progress and reach higher levels
 - raise teachers' expectations of what the most able pupils can achieve, particularly in mathematics
 - regularly plan to build on pupils' literacy and numeracy skills in other subjects and set work that enables pupils to practise areas of known weakness immediately
 - strengthen pupils' spelling and understanding of grammar
 - use marking and pupils' targets to inform pupils about how well they are doing; set out the next steps for them to take, and check that their advice has been acted on.
- Improve pupils' attendance rates to above average by:
 - giving pupils' individual attendance targets and regularly reviewing them as attendance improves
 - making sure that pupils and their parents understand the link between attendance and the rate of pupils' progress.
- Strengthen the impact of leadership and management at all levels by ensuring that:
 - teachers' performance management targets are measureable and challenging and focus directly on raising achievement
 - subject leaders lead and manage their areas effectively and are held to account for teaching, achievement, assessment and the quality of pupils' work in their areas of responsibility
 - leaders carry out an audit of literacy and numeracy across the school and make sure that there are regular opportunities to reinforce pupils' reading, writing and numeracy skills, including spelling, in other subjects
 - governors focus more urgently on the impact of measures to raise standards and improve teaching so that they can more accurately judge whether these are appropriate and bringing about the improvements the school needs.

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

- Pupils make only the progress expected in writing and mathematics by the end of Year 6; few make the rapid progress needed for them to achieve higher standards.
- There is too much variation in the performance of different groups of pupils. Over time, not enough more able pupils have gone on to achieve higher levels, especially in mathematics. This is because work is not sufficiently challenging and does not enable them to apply their range of skills in different subjects or deepen their thinking and knowledge.
- Pupils eligible for pupil premium funding make similar rates of progress in English and mathematics to those seen nationally, but this is not enough to ensure they are rapidly catching up with their classmates. Although numbers are small, these pupils are still a year behind the others in both subjects despite the school allocating funds specifically to strengthen reading, writing and mathematics skills, through one-to-one tuition, attendance projects and positive play schemes.
- Pupils' spelling is not secure enough. Results in the latest national tests were below average and have been over time.
- There has been improvement year-on-year for the last three years in pupils' reading. In 2013, the proportions exceeding expected levels matched national averages. Most pupils are able to sound out groups of letters accurately and many read with good expression.
- An above average proportion of pupils achieved expected levels in writing, and the school has seen an improvement, particularly in boys' writing, this year.
- Through sharp analyses of the causes of the dip last year, the school has a good knowledge of the gaps in pupils' mathematical knowledge and pupils are now being given prompt and specific support to address their needs.
- In most lessons, there is an effective balance between the time given to direct teaching and that set aside for pupils to practise what they have learnt. Pupils enjoy learning for themselves and consulting with their classmates. In numeracy, in particular, teachers encourage pupils to focus on how to calculate an answer and why they choose a particular method.
- Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs make good progress because the school knows their needs and the support they give meets their individual needs.

The quality of teaching requires improvement

- Teaching is improving but not enough is consistently good. There is an over-reliance on additional support for pupils, rather than on consistently good teaching.
- The main reason for pupils not making good progress is that work is not set consistently at the right level of difficulty, especially but not exclusively in the case of more able pupils. In some lessons, the work is too easy for some pupils and so their progress slows and their interest wanes.

- Teaching does not provide enough opportunities for pupils to write at length and to practise their spelling and grammatical skills in other subjects. Where teachers do give opportunities for pupils to practise their literacy skills, often these activities do not reflect the specific skills that pupils have just learnt and need to practise. As the school acknowledges, there are too few opportunities for pupils to practise their numeracy learning across the full range of subjects.
- The quality of teachers' marking varies. Although some is helpful in telling pupils what they have learnt well and what to do next, such as in Year 5 numeracy, elsewhere the guidance given does not always make clear how pupils can improve their learning. Similarly, pupils' misconceptions are not always picked up quickly enough or explained in the following lesson. When teachers give advice, they do not ensure pupils make the necessary corrections. All pupils have targets to improve their work, but in general they are unclear as to the knowledge and skills that their target levels equate to, and they are rarely referred to in lessons.
- Pupils have plenty of opportunities to practise their reading and understanding of texts. The teaching of letters and sounds (phonics) is good and gives pupils a secure foundation on which to build their reading and writing skills. However, teaching does not provide enough chances for pupils to write at length and to practise their spelling and grammatical skills.
- Despite the weaknesses identified above, the teaching of mathematics is improving. The school recognised that teaching was not good enough and has put in place measures designed to improve it. Inspectors saw good teaching in Year 6 where teachers encouraged pupils to focus on how to calculate an answer and explain why they chose a particular method.
- Teaching assistants are well trained and effective in supporting pupils' learning. They question pupils carefully, encouraging them to stay motivated and really think about their learning and about the answers they give. This is helping pupils receiving support to make good progress.

The behaviour and safety of pupils

requires improvement

- Pupils' attendance rates are below average and this restricts their rates of progress, particularly in the case of those who are persistent absentees. While the proportion of pupils who are persistently absent from school has fallen, it is still above average, although the school is tenacious in following-up the reasons for absence.
- Some pupils' attitudes to learning require improvement. In lessons where they are not sufficiently involved or work is too easy or hard, some pupils lose both interest and focus.
- The majority of pupils behave well in lessons. The school manages effectively the behaviour of those pupils who find it difficult to manage their actions and words. As a result, the number of behavioural incidents has reduced by half over the last year.
- Pupils behave sensibly around the school, keep it tidy and show politeness to each other and towards adults in the school.
- Pupils say they feel safe. They are able to explain a range of potential dangers and how to stay safe. Pupils say there is very little bullying because the school does not tolerate it and the staff deal with it quickly and well. Pupils are confident in expressing their thoughts and opinions because of the trust that they have in the staff.
- Pupils have a range of duties to help them to develop their personal and social skills and to help them become good team players, such as running the tuck shop and their own clubs.

Representatives of the school council enjoy their involvement, such as contributing to the 'Be Safe' school project and involvement in the appointment of new staff.

- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding is promoted well overall. Learning activities incorporate a wide range of opportunities for them to appreciate the cultures and beliefs of others, develop enterprise skills and demonstrate their empathy for those in need, through regular fundraising.

The leadership and management

requires improvement

- Leaders at all levels have not been effective in ensuring pupils make good progress throughout the school or that teaching is consistently good. Leaders and managers have not been sufficiently swift in identifying and removing barriers to pupils' learning and progress.
- Teachers' performance targets are not focused on raising achievement sufficiently. While some performance targets are measurable and challenging, others, particularly those relating to strengthening leadership skills, are less so.
- Subject leaders support other staff and provide training. However, they do not have a full role in checking how well pupils are doing. They do not check teaching and progress regularly enough in their areas. Therefore, they are not fully aware of inconsistencies in teaching and pupils' achievement. Leaders do not ensure that literacy and numeracy skills are practised in all subjects and are therefore effective in raising achievement.
- The detailed tracking of achievement by the headteacher and senior leaders and the actions resulting from their findings is resulting in important improvements, including in pupils' reading skills, and the good progress of pupils who find learning difficult. The behaviour of those pupils who struggle to manage their actions and words continues to improve.
- Learning opportunities focus heavily on reading, writing and mathematics while providing a broad balance of other activities. Pupils enjoy learning through topics but are not given sufficient opportunities to practise literacy and numeracy skills outside English and mathematics lessons. They benefit from the range of after-school activities, which are well attended by all groups of pupils, including those eligible for pupil premium funding. The school is using its additional sports funding to provide specialist sports coaches, who are also helping to train the staff in the necessary teaching skills. One good impact of this has been the improvements in attitudes to school and learning of those pupils who have behavioural issues.
- The school values its links with parents, who are very supportive of its work and value the lengths it goes to, to care for their children. Since the last inspection, the school has extended the opportunities for parents to be involved in activities and in their children's learning, including through the popular learning platform and homework projects.
- The local authority visits the school regularly and is providing support to promote high quality teaching and to strengthen leadership.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body ensures that safeguarding requirements are met. The governors understand the need for pupils' progress to accelerate but have not been able to identify the reasons why this is not happening fast enough. The headteacher provides them with extensive information about the school's performance and they understand national data and increasingly find out about the school's performance for themselves. As with achievement,

however, they know that the quality of teaching is inconsistent but once again, not why nor what is needed for it to improve.

- The governors have ensured that they know how the pupil premium funding has been used, and have overseen the introduction of new systems for managing the performance of staff. In neither case, however, have they concentrated sufficiently on the impact of these measures.

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	112497
Local authority	Derbyshire
Inspection number	424958

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	179
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Chris Hurt
Headteacher	Helen Littlewood
Date of previous school inspection	4 October 2011
Telephone number	01773 528492
Email address	info@riddings-jun.derbyshire.sch.uk

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