

Rickmansworth Park Junior Mixed and Infant School

Park Road, Rickmansworth, WD3 1HU

Inspection dates 5–6 December 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	Good	2
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 achieve well in English and mathematics as they move up through the school.
- Pupils' overall attainment at the end of Year 6 has been rising steadily over the past two years. In 2013, standards were significantly higher than the national average.
- Teaching is good and some is outstanding. Teachers have good subject knowledge and plan lessons which are enjoyable and stimulating so that pupils are excited about learning.
- Pupils behave well in lessons and around the school. They work with each other with maturity and demonstrate strong respect for adults and classmates alike. They feel very safe in school and know that their contributions are valued.
- The headteacher, ably assisted by other leaders and the governing body, has been effective in improving the quality of teaching and raising achievement markedly across the school.
- Governors play an effective role in supporting school development and in holding leaders to account for pupils' achievement.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Achievement in writing is not as strong as in other subjects. This is because writing skills are not promoted consistently across all subjects.
- Marking does not always give pupils clear guidance about how to improve their work, and pupils do not always act on the advice they are given.
- Work is not always sufficiently challenging for more-able pupils.
- Pupils' handwriting and presentation skills are not always well developed in all year groups.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed 13 lessons, one of which was a joint observation with the headteacher and one with the deputy headteacher. The inspectors also heard pupils in Years 2 and 6 read.
- Meetings were held with groups of pupils, members of the school’s staff, the Chair of the Governing Body and a representative of the local authority.
- The inspectors took account of the 47 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View), results of a parental survey carried out by the school and 15 responses to the staff inspection questionnaire. They also sought the views of parents through informal discussions at the start of the school day.
- The inspectors looked at a range of documents including the school’s own data on pupils’ current attainment and progress, the school’s evaluation of its performance, school improvement planning, documentation relating to teachers’ performance over time and records relating to safeguarding and pupils’ behaviour.

Inspection team

Tusha Chakraborti, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Graham Gossage

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- The large majority of pupils are White British. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds is above the national average and the proportion who speaks English as an additional language is average.
- The proportion of pupils eligible for support through the pupil premium, which provides additional funding for children in local authority care and pupils known to be eligible for free school meals, is well below average.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs 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 school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in English and mathematics.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching so that it is consistently good and more is outstanding by ensuring that:
 - teachers consistently use assessment information to organise learning activities that are at the right level for pupils and are sufficiently challenging, especially for the more-able
 - all pupils are given clear guidance on the next steps in their learning, and that they act on the guidance they are given.
- Speed up pupils' progress across the school by:
 - extending the opportunities for pupils to apply their writing and numeracy skills in all subjects
 - giving close attention to improving pupils' handwriting and presentation skills in all year groups.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Children start in Reception with knowledge and skills that are typically in line with those expected for their age. A well-planned programme of learning and good teaching ensure that children make rapid progress. As a result, attainment at the end of Reception is typically above average.
- Pupils make good progress in reading, writing and mathematics overall. Progress in writing has not been as strong as in other subjects because pupils do not have sufficient opportunities to develop extended writing skills in subjects other than English. It is, however, improving rapidly.
- The 2011 Years 2 and 6 national test results dipped, partly due to some staffing difficulty. The school responded rapidly to resolve this issue by improving the quality of teaching through a very effective staff training programme. In 2013, pupils' overall attainment by the end of Year 6 was significantly above the national average, especially in mathematics and reading. The school's data on pupils' progress and targets for 2014, supported by the work seen in their books and in lessons, show that progress in all areas, including writing, has accelerated significantly over the past two years and pupils are on track to reach high standards at the end of Year 6.
- Standards in reading are high across the school. Younger pupils apply their knowledge of phonics (linking letters and sounds) to pronounce unfamiliar words and show understanding of the stories they read. Older pupils develop a good understanding of different styles of writing and write well for different purposes. The results of the Year 1 phonics screening check were well above average in both 2012 and 2013. A strong focus on mental mathematics and investigation is helping pupils to acquire good problem-solving skills.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make similar progress to the other pupils in their classes because the school provides well-targeted support for them. Pupils who speak English as an additional language also make equally good progress as their classmates.
- The proportion of pupils supported by the pupil premium who make expected progress is consistently in line with national figures. However, because of the small numbers of pupils in each year group, the average attainment varies considerably from year-to-year. In 2013 pupils, on average, were two terms behind their classmates in English and mathematics. The current data shows that most of these pupils are making good progress and the gap is narrowing. Staff have a very good understanding of individual pupils' needs and the school uses the additional funding effectively to provide support for individuals or small groups of pupils.

The quality of teaching is good

- The quality of teaching has been good and is improving. Most parents agree that teaching is good. Teachers and other staff provide a positive and purposeful learning environment. They treat pupils with respect and are interested in what they have to say. As a result, pupils are actively engaged in lessons and know that teachers are interested in their views and ideas.
- In Reception, adults help children to work on their own and in groups, developing knowledge and skills rapidly in all areas of learning. Adults encourage children to enjoy reading stories and to become confident in re-telling the stories they read. This was demonstrated by groups of

children narrating their own version of the story *Cuddly Dudley*. Children are given opportunities to pursue activities of their own choice, as well as those directed by adults, through a balanced indoor-and-outdoor programme of learning.

- Teachers have good subject knowledge. In the best lessons, teachers make sure that pupils are fully involved in their learning by asking searching questions that assess pupils' understanding and make them think hard. They build effectively on pupils' prior learning, drawing on the knowledge and skills that pupils gain in other subjects. In an English lesson, in Year 5, pupils explored how to write a formal 'police report' including vital details. This was linked well to their previous work on several newspaper and police reports on crimes.
- The teaching of reading is strong. Guided reading sessions are used well to deepen pupils' understanding of a range of stories, analysing the impact of key events and characters. Pupils develop a good understanding of fiction and information texts and know how to use a glossary to find information. Pupils have the opportunity to write for different purposes but pupils' handwriting and presentation skills are not well developed in all year groups.
- Teaching assistants work closely with teachers in planning and delivering lessons. They were seen to provide effective support for disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs, and those who are supported by the pupil premium.
- Teachers usually set tasks that are pitched at the appropriate level for pupils' different abilities but this is not consistently so. Sometimes the work for more-able pupils, does not fully extend their skills and understanding.
- Teachers mark pupils' work regularly but do not always include guidance on how to improve it. In some cases, next steps are suggested but teachers do not make sure that pupils follow the advice they are given, so they do not make as much progress as they should.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Pupils demonstrate positive attitudes towards their learning and want to do well. Within lessons, they show a growing love for reading and show enjoyment at joining in all the learning activities. They listen to adults and each other with respect, working with each other well during lessons. This all contributes greatly to their good achievement.
- Pupils behave well and learning in lessons proceeds without disruption. They are polite, courteous and have good manners. They respond very well to the school's positive approach to behaviour and grow as confident learners.
- Pupils feel safe in school. They know different forms that bullying can take, including cyber-bullying. They say that bullying rarely happens in school, a view supported by school records. They are confident that adults will deal with any rare incidents of bullying fairly and effectively, should they occur. Most parents who responded to the questionnaire said that behaviour was good and their children are kept safe at school.
- Pupils have a good understanding of how to keep themselves and others safe because the school includes issues about safety through its teaching and consistent work with parents. Pupils are well aware of various types of safety issues such as internet safety, fire and road safety.
- Pupils develop a strong sense of responsibility, which is reflected in their commitment to the

work of the school council and their roles as play leaders and 'buddies' for younger pupils. They raise funds for a range of charities.

- Attendance has been average over recent years but is improving. The school has ended the previous policy for authorising holidays during term time. Such absence is now registered as unauthorised. This action is beginning to improve the rate of attendance, as evident in the current year.

The leadership and management are good

- The senior leadership team has high aspirations to continue to improve the school. The school has an accurate view of its successes and what still needs to be improved. The impact of the actions that they have taken demonstrates that the school has the capacity for further improvement.
- Subject leaders provide support to class teachers in planning their lessons and monitor pupils' achievement across the school.
- Leadership of the Early Years Foundation Stage is effective and children are helped to settle quickly and make good progress.
- The quality of teaching is monitored effectively against challenging individual annual performance targets for staff. Systems to monitor performance and set targets for teachers are robust and identify the skills they need to improve. Well-planned programmes of training, for example, to raise the expertise of staff in reading, writing and mathematics, have helped teachers to improve their work. Teachers' targets are linked closely to *Teachers' Standards* and staff at all levels are held to account for the progress that pupils make.
- A well-organised curriculum provides good opportunities for many enjoyable learning experiences for all groups of pupils, to which they respond well. Visits to places of interest and a range of clubs and events in school make pupils' learning meaningful. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted well through the teaching of different subjects, including religious studies.
- Within the school, leaders have ensured that there is no discrimination of any kind. They have made strong progress in ensuring equality of opportunity but are aware that there are a few areas to address, including ensuring that work is equally challenging for all pupils.
- Using the additional primary school sport funding, the school has appointed a secondary sports specialist to enhance opportunities for pupils to develop their sporting skills further and to train teachers in school to extend their expertise in delivering high-quality physical education lessons. It is too early to assess the impact of the funding at this stage.
- The school uses independent consultants to support it in the monitoring of the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement. They therefore seek very limited support from the local authority. However, an adviser from the local authority met the inspectors during inspection.

■ The governance of the school:

- The governors have an accurate understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school and play an active role in the school's development. They understand data provided for them about pupils' achievement and know how the school's results compare with other schools nationally, and why achievement in writing is a priority for development. The governors support and challenge leaders in asking searching questions about how teachers are rewarded for good performance and how underperformance is tackled to raise achievement. Governors know how funding is used, including pupil premium and sports funding, and are well informed about how well funding is supporting pupils' achievement. Governors carry out their statutory duties effectively and ensure that the procedures for safeguarding pupils fully meet national requirements.

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	117304
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	425375

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	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	210
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Lindsay Unsworth
Headteacher	Peta Dyke
Date of previous school inspection	29 September 2008
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