

Ramsey Community Junior School

Station Road, Ramsey, Huntingdon, PE26 1JA

Inspection dates 24–25 September 2014

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- A team of determined and capable leaders and governors has secured dramatic improvements in each key aspect of the school's work. All teachers are committed to raising standards further.
- Leaders responsible for subjects have ensured pupils complete work that interests them and helps them to move forward. Most pupils enjoy learning, work hard and want to do well.
- Pupils' conduct around school is good. Pupils enjoy good working relationships with their peers and with staff, who keep them safe and secure.
- Teaching has improved dramatically and is now good, because leaders have ensured that clear, and high, expectations are met. Good support for teachers helps all to increase the impact of their work on pupils' progress.
- Throughout the school most pupils are making good, and sometimes exceptional, progress as they work to catch up, or to meet their challenging targets.
- Leaders' well-designed changes to the curriculum are ensuring the development of pupils' knowledge, understanding and skills across different subjects.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Despite strong recent progress, the legacy of underachievement has resulted in some older pupils still being behind where they could be, particularly in writing and mathematics.
- Teachers do not always respond quickly or effectively enough when pupils get stuck or need to move on to more demanding work.
- A minority of pupils do not try as hard as they might to reach their challenging targets. Some do not always know how they can improve their work.
- Pupils' understanding and appreciation of different cultures, and of Britain's democratic parliamentary system, are not good enough.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector spent much of his time observing teaching and learning, and looking at the work in pupils' books. He observed teaching in 11 lessons, a number of which were seen jointly with the headteacher, and made short visits to another seven lessons.
- The inspector observed the school's work, and scrutinised a range of other evidence, including information about pupils' achievement and progress, safeguarding, behaviour management and leaders' monitoring of teaching.
- Meetings were held with leaders, members of school staff, a representative of the local authority, and members of the governing body. The inspector spoke formally with a group of pupils, and others shared their views informally during lessons and break periods.
- The inspector took into account 54 responses submitted to Ofsted's online Parent View website, and survey information about parents' views provided by the school.
- The inspector took into account the findings from his previous three visits to the school.

Inspection team

Jason Howard, Lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Full report

In accordance with section 13 (4) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the school no longer requires special measures.

Information about this school

- Ramsey Community Junior School is smaller than the average-sized junior school.
- The executive headteacher was appointed in April 2013. She is also the headteacher of Ramsey Spinning Infant School. The two schools formed a 'hard' federation in July 2014.
- At the previous inspection in July 2013, the school was placed in special measures because it was failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education. This inspection took place during Her Majesty's Inspector's fourth monitoring visit.
- Most pupils are White British. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds is average. Few pupils speak English as an additional language.
- An above-average proportion of the pupils are eligible for the pupil premium. This is additional government funding for pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals, or looked after by the local authority.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported through school action is average. The proportion supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is above 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?

- Enable pupils to make even better progress, and achieve highly, by ensuring that all teachers:
 - respond quickly and effectively when pupils are ready to move on during lessons, so that their progress is maintained
 - give pupils feedback, in all subject areas, that shows them how to improve their work, and ensure they act upon it
 - encourage pupils to apply their mathematical skills to problem-solving activities
 - reinforce the need for accuracy in written work, particularly in spelling
 - challenge, and support, pupils who have low expectations of what they can achieve.
- Ensure that changes to the curriculum help foster pupils' understanding of other cultures, and of Britain's parliamentary democracy.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are good

- The executive headteacher has worked decisively to build a team of effective leaders who have addressed the school's urgent priorities for improvement. Teachers and leaders share high ambitions for pupils, which are now being realised. Most are making very rapid progress because of the dramatic improvement in teaching. This is clear from the school's monitoring data, greatly improved results in the Key Stage 2 national tests, and evidence in pupils' work over time.
- Leaders and teachers are held to account for standards in their areas. Detailed and appropriate plans for improvement, together with effective training, identify the necessary changes, and help staff to make them. Leaders use effective systems to check the ongoing impact of teaching on pupils' progress, and ensure that the ideas and approaches that work best to promote it are shared. This is creating a culture in which teachers constantly reflect on the best ways to quicken the pace, and increase the depth, of pupils' learning.
- Leaders monitor pupils' performance in tests and assessments, use this information to determine which pupils need additional help, and review the impact of existing support during regular pupil progress meetings. The school's data, and pupils' work, indicate that this additional support is effective in ensuring pupils catch up. Pupil performance data is also used to hold teachers to account.
- Subject leaders have secured very rapid improvements. The English and mathematics leaders have a clear understanding of what has been achieved, what remains to be done, and the next steps that need to be taken. Additional training and support have helped staff to improve the teaching of literacy and numeracy. This has helped to raise standards considerably in a short space of time.
- Leaders' changes to the curriculum have ensured that pupils practise and develop their literacy and numeracy skills across different subjects. The curriculum is broad and balanced, and improvements in English and mathematics have not been made at the expense of pupils' enjoyment of, or achievement in, other subjects.
- The school's promotion of pupils' spiritual, moral, and social education throughout the curriculum is good. Pupils gain an understanding of different religious faiths, and are willing to reflect on their experiences, beliefs and learning. During this inspection, pupils discussed the difference between conflict and bullying, and how to minimise the risk of conflicts escalating. The school's behaviour policy helps pupils distinguish between right and wrong, and pupils are keen to help others via their work as 'peer mediators' and 'bench buddies'. Visits from adults who discuss the jobs they do help pupils to understand some of their future employment options, and how to access them. However, the school's promotion of pupils' cultural education is less strong overall. Pupils are exposed to a variety of forms of music, including opera and jazz; they respond to these opportunities readily. They enjoy participating in a number of trips, including the popular history trip to Belgium. Their understanding of different cultures and of Britain's parliamentary democracy, however, is weak.
- The special educational needs coordinator's careful work with staff has ensured individual pupils' needs are met within the classroom wherever possible, reducing the frequency with which they are taught in small groups away from their peers and so miss the work that others are completing.
- Additional funding to support physical education has been used to broaden the range of sporting activities that pupils can engage in within school, though pupils' opportunities to engage in competitive sport remain limited.
- As the school's capacity to improve has increased, the extent of the local authority's monitoring and support has reduced. In the past, it has provided considerable support, helping leaders to check standards and maintain a focus on the most important priorities. Guidance from specialist subject advisors has aided leaders' efforts to improve the quality of teaching in English and mathematics. Additional funding has allowed the school to secure extra tuition that has enabled pupils to catch up.

- Leaders have worked well to keep parents informed about changes and improvements and have started to provide resources for parents so that they can support their children's learning at home. Parental surveys indicate the renewed confidence most have in the quality of education provided by the school.

■ The governance of the school:

- Governors are driven, and determined to pursue school improvement. The governing body monitors the quality of teaching, and the progress made by different groups of pupils, including those supported by the pupil premium, regularly. It has taken actions to challenge, and support, leaders to ensure the swift removal of any barriers preventing pupils' progress. Governors have managed the school's finances effectively, increasing the school's capacity to improve by enabling additional leaders and teachers to be recruited. It has arranged external checks to confirm the accuracy of teachers' marking of assessments. Teachers' salary progression is linked to the progress that pupils make. Poor performance is tackled decisively and some difficult decisions have been made. Governors make sure the school fulfils its statutory duties, including those to keep pupils safe through safeguarding practices such as the safe recruitment of staff.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- The behaviour of pupils is good. They are almost unfailingly polite and welcoming, smartly dressed and punctual. They enjoy positive relationships with school staff and with each other. Pupils' conduct when moving around the school site, and during break and lunch periods, is almost always good. Few need to be reminded about the school's expectations by the adults who supervise them.
- The great majority of pupils have responded to the high expectations set by teachers and leaders. They usually listen carefully to the teacher, get started on their work quickly, and keep trying even if they initially find something difficult. Very often, pupils engage with their work enthusiastically, and are keen both to contribute their ideas, and to consider those of others. Teachers' use of the school's reward system is effective in recognising and reinforcing the behaviours that help pupils to learn.
- Sometimes, pupils become distracted, or lose focus, if they continue to find their work too easy or too difficult, but disruption to the learning of others is rare. When it does occur, it is usually when pupils are not being taught by their permanent teacher.
- Attendance is above the national average, and improving. Very few pupils arrive late to school. Leaders monitor absence carefully and respond to the rare instances of persistent absence quickly, appropriately and with impact.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. All safeguarding procedures meet requirements and are effective. Leaders identify, and work well with others to support and monitor, children who may be at risk.
- Bullying is rare and dealt with effectively. Leaders respond well when incidents occur; work to help pupils understand why the use of homophobic language is unacceptable has helped to prevent a small number of pupils who were using such language from continuing to do so. Pupils' work as 'peer mediators' helps individuals to resolve conflicts with others quickly before disputes intensify.
- The curriculum helps pupils to understand and manage risks, such as those associated with use of the internet.

The quality of teaching is good

- The quality of teaching has improved substantially and sustainably since the school was placed in special measures. Inadequate teaching has been eliminated. As a result, most pupils in all year groups make good progress. The overwhelming majority of parents who expressed a view to Ofsted think that their children are well taught. Pupils agree.

- Pupils usually complete activities that are interesting and varied. The purpose of tasks is clear, and in most subjects pupils understand how each will help them make progress towards their challenging targets. Teachers encourage pupils to persist if they initially find the work difficult, and make sure they have resources to help them. When pupils can choose between activities, many, particularly the more able, opt for the most demanding. Success encourages most to believe they can achieve.
- Pupils enjoy thinking about, and discussing, 'big questions', as was evident during a philosophy lesson seen during the inspection. Much teaching is preparing pupils for the next stage in their education by helping pupils to think clearly and reason logically. During a history lesson, pupils were able to explain a number of reasons why the river Nile was so important to the Egyptians.
- Most teachers plan activities so that each builds on what pupils already know and can do. Their daily marking helps alert them to how far pupils have made the necessary progress after completing a particular activity. Most then plan tasks that enable pupils to take the next steps in their learning, or that help those who found the work hard to understand it before moving on.
- Teachers ask questions to check pupils' understanding and to encourage them to develop their ideas fully. Often, this helps the more-able pupils to construct more complex responses. Teachers' questioning often helps pupils understand where they went wrong, and how to find the right answer or use a more appropriate technique. In a mathematics lesson, this kind of questioning helped a pupil to understand where her thinking had become confused, and arrive at the correct answer to a multiplication question – to her evident delight.
- In literacy, and across other subjects, teachers show pupils how to structure pieces of extended writing appropriately, and give them regular opportunities to practise writing at length. Teachers often show pupils examples of effective writing, so they can see how to write for different purposes and audiences. Most pupils construct sentences well, and enjoy their increasing ability to express their creativity coherently. During one literacy lesson, pupils were keen to start writing about what happened when they opened the 'mystery box' they found in the playground and discovered what was inside. Regular practise and testing is helping improve the accuracy of pupils' spelling, but many older pupils continue to make basic errors.
- One pupil explained that, in mathematics, 'We do lots of different things and work at the right level; before, we all did the same work even if it was too easy, and got bored because there wasn't much variety.' Where learning is most rapid, pupils practise new techniques for just long enough before moving on to more difficult work, and regularly use their mathematical skills to solve problems. Sometimes pupils complete too many practise calculations that they find straightforward, delaying the point at which they start more demanding work.
- Teachers generally give pupils feedback on their work that makes clear what they need to do to improve it. When pupils are given time to review their work, correct errors, and add more detail, most do so. Some do not, and continue to make the same mistakes. Teachers' feedback in subjects other than English and mathematics is of more variable quality. It does not always make clear how pupils can improve their work.
- Teachers work with other adults who support learning effectively. They plan, together, how to best support pupils who need additional help, lesson by lesson, and monitor its impact. This is helping most pupils to catch up rapidly.
- Where learning is less effective, pupils make less progress. Typically this is either because they are not sure how to complete a task effectively, or because the teacher asks them to begin new activities before checking that their previous learning is secure. Sometimes this means pupils find tasks too easy or too difficult, and teachers do not always respond quickly enough when progress slows.

The achievement of pupils is good

- The progress that most pupils make over the course of Key Stage 2 in reading, writing and mathematics

has accelerated significantly since the previous inspection, when it was judged to be inadequate. Consequently, the achievement of current pupils is much stronger than that reported in published information.

- Pupils work towards demanding targets, with most responding to their teachers' high expectations readily. In most subjects, most pupils know the target they are working towards, and how to achieve it. Many are determined to make the improvements needed, but some lack this ambition.
- Most of the Year 6 pupils who took the national tests in 2014 reached levels closer to national averages in mathematics and in writing than was the case in 2013. The proportions achieving and exceeding the expected levels in reading were both higher than was the case nationally.
- Pupils currently in Year 5 and Year 6 have made greatly accelerated progress over the past year, particularly in reading and writing, often from low starting points. Where they have fallen behind, they are catching up quickly. Pupils enjoy reading and read widely. They use the sounds letters make to help them read unfamiliar words. Teachers encourage them to think about what they are reading carefully, and pupils' understanding is secure. Pupils' ability to construct sentences appropriately, and to write at length for different purposes and audiences, have both improved considerably.
- In mathematics, pupils are more able to solve mathematical problems than in the past, though the extent to which they are able to apply their skills in this way still varies. Pupils often need to think hard because the work they complete is demanding. Faster progress in mathematics has not been sufficient to fully close the gaps in some older pupils' knowledge and understanding caused by poor teaching in the past.
- Most pupils in Years 3 to 5 who have special educational needs make progress at about the same rate as other pupils, as a result of the effective support they receive. Some in Year 6 have made less progress than their peers since the start of Key Stage 2, particularly in writing, and they continue to work below age-expected levels. The school's monitoring data indicate that the effective support they are receiving is helping them to catch up.
- In most year groups, the gap between both the attainment in reading, writing and mathematics of those supported by the pupil premium and that of others is narrowing. Those who took the national tests in 2014 made good progress and most achieved at least as well as their peers. Their attainment in English and mathematics was broadly in line with that of all pupils nationally.
- The more-able pupils are making particularly rapid progress because most teachers ensure that the work they complete is suitably demanding.
- The school's leaders are committed to ensuring all pupils receive the support they need. Pupils are encouraged to try hard, and to not be afraid to make mistakes; teachers usually help them to learn from these. This ethos, together with positive working relationships, is helping to promote the achievement of all.

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	447396

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Junior
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	7–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	214
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Stephanie Beale
Headteacher	Patsy Peres
Date of previous school inspection	4–5 July 2013
Telephone number	01487 812500
Fax number	Not applicable
Email address	office@ramsey.cambs.sch.uk

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