

Rowanfield Infant School

Alstone Lane, Cheltenham, Gloucestershire, GL51 8HY

Inspection dates 24–25 September 2014

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement. It is not good because

- Senior leaders and governors have not ensured that pupils' achievement in writing has been good enough since the last inspection. Pupils are given too few opportunities to write at length across a range of lessons.
- In the past, teachers have not sufficiently challenged the most-able pupils. Consequently, too few pupils reach the higher standards expected at the end of Year 2.
- Although rapidly improving, the quality of teaching has not been consistently good over time to ensure good progress, especially in writing and the development of pupils' speaking skills.
- Teachers' marking in subjects other than English and mathematics is variable and does not always help pupils to understand how to improve.
- The teaching of phonics (the sounds that letters make) is not consistently good and, as a result, not enough pupils in Year 1 reach the expected standard.
- Senior leaders and governors have not had enough time to demonstrate the full impact of their actions. This is largely the reason that some of the key findings require improvement.

The school has the following strengths

- In a short space of time, the headteacher has addressed a legacy of underachievement and raised the expectations of the whole school community. Her unswerving commitment to improve outcomes for pupils is raising standards.
- The quality of teaching and pupils' achievement is rapidly improving. At the end of Year 2, more pupils are reaching the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics. Attainment is now broadly in line with the national average.
- Governors are actively involved with the school and make regular checks on the quality of teaching to help the school improve.
- Teaching in the Early Years Foundation Stage is good. The proportion of children reaching a good level of development is close to the national average.
- Pupils' attitudes to learning are consistently positive across the school. Social and moral skills are well developed through interesting lessons. Consequently, pupils are friendly, polite and behave well.
- Pupils feel safe in school. Adults ensure that pupils know the procedures for staying safe online, as well as other aspects of safety.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed two assemblies, play and lunchtime behaviour, and visited 15 lessons or part of lessons, three of which were carried out jointly with the headteacher and senior staff.
- Meetings were held with senior leaders, teachers, support staff, pupils, five members of the governing body and the local authority intervention adviser.
- A wide range of documentation was scrutinised which included school improvement plans and minutes from meetings, as well as safeguarding information.
- Inspectors held informal discussions with parents, and took account of 14 responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View.
- Questionnaire responses from 30 members of staff were also analysed.

Inspection team

Dale Burr, Lead inspector

Seconded Inspector

Judith Tinsley

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Rowanfield Infant School is an average-sized school.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium (additional government funding for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals or children in the care of the local authority) is well above the national average.
- The vast majority of pupils are from White British backgrounds. A very small minority of pupils speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of pupils who are disabled or have special educational needs is above the national average. The proportion of pupils supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is larger than the national average.
- A new headteacher was appointed to the school in April 2014.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching so that it is consistently good or better and raise pupils' achievement by:
 - planning work that is challenging enough for the most-able pupils, so that a higher proportion makes more than expected progress, especially in writing
 - assessing pupils' phonics (the sounds that letters make) knowledge and raising expectations in lessons so that a greater proportion of pupils achieve the expected standard at the end of Year 1
 - ensuring teachers' marking and feedback in all subjects help pupils to understand how to improve
 - encouraging pupils to speak in full sentences when communicating with adults
 - extending the opportunities for pupils to apply their writing skills across a range of subjects.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher has successfully restructured responsibilities and raised the expectations of all staff. She has created an ethos of a hard working community striving for academic excellence. Meticulous planning and a drive for school improvement are evident across all levels of leadership.
- School leaders have an accurate and secure picture of the school's strengths and areas to develop. The 'raising attainment plan' is well focused and provides clear actions to secure improvement. Aspirational targets are shared with staff and there is evidence of accelerated progress for many pupils in reading, writing and mathematics. Arrangements for making checks on progress include governors, senior and middle leaders.
- Leaders have created clear guidance to improve the quality of teaching and challenge inconsistent practice. This guidance is proving effective at supporting pupils' achievement and ensuring that only the best teaching is good enough.
- Good systems are in place to check on the progress of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs. The well-qualified inclusion leader uses detailed information to match support to pupils' needs. Planning, case studies and progress reports indicate a greater proportion of pupils are making at least expected progress than those in previous years.
- Pupils entitled to the additional government funding (pupil premium) are closing the gaps on their national counterparts in reading and mathematics. There are regular meetings to monitor pupils' progress and check if any pupils are falling behind. The attainment gap is widest in writing; the school is not providing enough opportunities for pupils to write at length across a range of lessons.
- Subject leaders for English and mathematics are improving teaching. They articulate high expectations and ambition for the school. They use educational research and links with neighbouring schools to develop practice.
- The Early Years Foundation Stage leader has made changes to the quality of provision to ensure more children reach a good level of development by the end of Reception. A structured approach to the teaching of phonics (the sounds that letters make) and additional opportunities for pupils to write are improving pupils' skills and knowledge.
- Pupils develop their social, moral, spiritual and cultural knowledge through an exciting range of lessons. For example, in assembly, pupils were learning about the value of friendship through cultural songs. Well-thought-out plans ensure pupils visit different places and broaden their understanding of life in modern Britain.
- Sport funding is used well to promote pupils' health and well-being. Staff training is improving teachers' confidence, particularly in gymnastics. Participation is high in additional sporting activities, such as handball, tag rugby and multi-skills.
- Pupils' attendance continues to improve and is now broadly average. Robust measures are in place to follow up absence. Punctuality has improved due, in part, to 'early bird' certificates and other incentives.
- The vast majority of parents, pupils and staff agree that the school is well led and managed. Pupils comment positively on the change in leadership. Remarks such as, 'This school just keeps on getting better,' and, 'The challenges are helping us learn more,' are further evidence of good leadership.
- The local authority provides good support to the school. It has contributed to improvements in the quality of teaching and learning, especially in mathematics.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors know the school and its community extremely well. They have a good understanding of the school's strengths and areas to develop. Minutes from meetings demonstrate a good level of challenge, especially about performance results. Since the appointment of the headteacher, governors have increased their presence and visibility in school. Visits to the school are frequent, including opportunities to check on the quality of teaching and use of additional funding and the difference it is making to pupils' achievement. Governors are well informed and play an active role in planning for the future. For example, they managed the finances well to recruit a 'behavioural and pastoral lead' to support the increasing number of vulnerable pupils. A robust system of performance management is in place and governors understand the importance of linking teachers' performance and pay. Safeguarding procedures are strong. Governors check on the school's safeguarding arrangements and undertake additional training, such as safer recruitment and keeping safe online. Community links have been developed through the church and the local Polish community. This makes the school an inclusive place to learn.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Most pupils behave well in lessons and conduct themselves well around the school and in the playground. Additional adult supervision at lunchtime promotes interaction and creates a happy and social atmosphere.
- Pupils respond positively to the school rules. Low-level disruption is rare and, when it does occur, it is dealt with rapidly and effectively. The school's records indicate that the new behaviour policy has virtually eliminated incidents of inappropriate behaviour. Pupils confirmed this view and told the inspectors, 'The new rules mean everyone behaves,' and, 'Good behaviour is rewarded with privileges.'
- Pupils with high levels of behavioural needs are supported well. The 'behavioural and pastoral lead' works effectively with outside agencies, including the neighbouring junior school, to support pupils with complex needs.
- Pupils enjoy their special responsibilities. The school's focus on developing pupils' social and moral skills, through the school council and house leaders, is improving pupils' personal development.
- The school's work to keep the pupils safe and secure is good. Pupils have an extensive knowledge about keeping safe online. They confidently told the inspectors how to stay safe using the internet. They have a good understanding about other forms of safety, such as water and fire safety and 'stranger danger'. The vast majority of staff and parents agree that the behaviour and safety of pupils are good.
- Pupils are made to feel safe at all times. Incidents of bullying are rare and pupils understand the differences between unkind behaviour and bullying. They are confident that if they were bullied that 'the teachers would sort it out'.
- Behaviour is not outstanding because during whole school gatherings, such as assembly, some older pupils need reminding to listen attentively.

The quality of teaching requires improvement

- Teaching is improving. Leaders are developing a culture of 'sharing the best practice', which is being championed by the 'leader of teaching and learning'. Expectations are high and leaders are relentless in their quest to secure good and outstanding teaching.
- Teaching has not been consistently good over time to ensure that pupils make good progress, particularly in writing and phonics (the sounds that letters make). Although recent changes have improved teaching, more time is needed to see the impact in pupils' outcomes, especially for the most able.
- Activities are well matched to pupils' needs. Evidence in pupils' books show that there has been a steep increase in teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve. Pupils have a 'can do' attitude and expect to be challenged in all lessons.
- The quality of teaching in the Early Years Foundation Stage is good. Staff work well as a team and have high expectations of pupils' independence and social skills. Occasionally, adults do not encourage pupils to answer in full sentences, which affects pupils' language and communication skills.
- The teaching of phonics is not consistently good across the school. In some classes, young pupils are much better at matching letters to sounds and their reading is developing much more quickly as a result.
- Teachers' marking and feedback in writing and mathematics are improving. Pupils can articulate that marking in green means 'you need to make changes' and pink means 'you are doing well'. This approach to marking is not equally applied to all lessons, so pupils do not always understand how to improve their work.
- Positive relationships exist between staff and pupils. Higher-level teaching assistants are skilled at challenging pupils through effective questioning, which is accelerating progress.
- During the inspection, some of the most effective teaching was observed in Year 2. For example, during mathematics and reading lessons, pupils were motivated because the activities were challenging and the adults asked probing questions to clarify pupils' understanding. Consequently, pupils in these lessons made good progress.

The achievement of pupils requires improvement

- Standards in the end of Year 1 phonic check show that pupils did not achieve as well as others nationally. As a result, the school has changed its approach to the teaching of early reading.
- Historically, not enough of the most-able pupils reach the higher levels of attainment, especially in writing. However, more pupils are now on track to attain the higher standards in reading, writing and

mathematics.

- Attainment at the end of Year 2 in reading, writing and mathematics is now broadly in line with national averages. Because of improvements in the quality of teaching and learning, progress for all groups of pupils is increasing.
- A large majority of children start Reception with levels of knowledge and skills that are below, and often well below, those typically expected, particularly in speaking, writing and numbers. In 2014, from low starting points, the school doubled the proportion of children working at age-related expectations at the end of the year. Consequently, children are well prepared for Year 1.
- Pupils entitled to the additional government funding (pupil premium) are now closing the gap on their national counterparts. For example, in Year 2, as a result of better than expected progress in reading and mathematics, the gap has closed to less than two months in reading and three months in mathematics. The gap is widest in writing and the school has rightly identified this as an area for improvement.
- The school tackles any forms of discrimination well and makes sure all pupils are treated equally. Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs are making good progress against their individual starting points. Early identification and closer links with parents are helping to support these pupils to make accelerated progress, especially in reading.
- Pupils with English as an additional language achieve well. They make good progress from their starting points and most pupils are on track to reach the standards expected for their ages, especially in mathematics and reading.

The early years provision

is good

- Good teaching and swift support enable all children to achieve well and make good progress in most areas of learning. The proportion of pupils who achieve a good level of development is close to the national average.
- A well-planned induction programme, including home visits, means that adults have a good understanding of children's individual needs. A weekly learning diary informs parents of their role as partners in learning and supports the school's vision of 'working with the whole community to support learning'. Parents told inspectors that they were pleased about the arrangements for starting school.
- Teaching impacts well on the quality of learning. Carefully planned lessons are helping to address weaknesses identified when children start school. For example, staff are providing additional activities to target children's pencil grip, which are developing early writing skills.
- 'Learning journey' books contain a wide range of assessments and activities, and show that children make good progress over time. Children and parents are encouraged to comment on the learning throughout the year. This provides another good link between school and home.
- Staff plan exciting learning opportunities using the indoor and outdoor facilities. Although the outdoor space is small, staff are doing their best to compensate for this by making best use of the school grounds. Children's contribution to the planning of activities is good. For example, a superheroes topic was developed in response to the children's interests.
- The Reception leader provides effective support. She has developed good links with the other settings and attends local meetings to check the accuracy of assessments. A specific action plan is addressing staff training as well as improving provision, such as learning challenges for children.
- Safeguarding in the Early Years Foundation Stage is good. Staff have developed a clear procedure for recording safeguarding concerns, which protects all children.

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	115592
Local authority	Gloucestershire
Inspection number	448456
Type of school	Infant
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	254
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Diana Wright
Headteacher	Aysha Akif
Date of previous school inspection	1–2 October 2009
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