

# Rowans Primary School

Rowans, Welwyn Garden City, AL7 1NZ

**Inspection dates** 11–12 February 2015

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

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

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

- Until recently, leaders have lacked an accurate view of the school's performance. Governors have not held leaders to account.
- Leaders including governors have not done enough to secure good teaching and achievement.
- Teachers have not kept accurate records of pupils' achievements. As a result, leaders have not made reliable comparisons with other schools or held teachers to account for the progress of pupils.
- Teaching has not been strong enough to secure good progress and to raise attainment. Not all teachers plan activities which challenge pupils.
- Marking does not always help pupils understand what to do to improve their learning.
- Pupils have not made good progress, especially in writing and mathematics. Not all pupils take pride in the presentation of their work.
- Children in the early years provision have too few opportunities to choose activities which help them to improve their skills and deepen their understanding. The outdoor provision is not used effectively enough.
- Attendance is below the national average. Some pupils do not come to school regularly or on time.

### The school has the following strengths

- The new headteacher has raised expectations of staff. Staff are now held accountable for the progress made by pupils in their care. As a result, teaching is improving.
- Pupils have positive attitudes towards learning. Their behaviour is good and they are safe in school. They say the school does all it can to keep them safe.
- Teaching assistants make a good contribution to learning. As a result, disadvantaged pupils, disabled pupils and those who have special educational are given good support.
- Provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed learning in nine lessons. All observations were undertaken jointly with the headteacher or deputy headteacher. Inspectors also made a number of other short visits to classrooms.
- Inspectors heard pupils read, and looked at writing from each year group and mathematics work from Key Stage 2, much of this with the headteacher or deputy headteacher.
- Inspectors looked at a range of documents, including the school improvement plan and records on behaviour, safety and attendance. They also looked at information on individual pupils' progress, records of checks on the quality of teaching, and records of meetings held by the governing body.
- Inspectors met with pupils, interviewed a sample of staff, and spoke with parents. They also spoke with members of the governing body and a representative from the local authority.
- The views of parents were obtained through the 25 responses to the online, Parent View, survey. Inspectors also considered three written comments from parents. Written comments from 17 members of staff were considered.

## Inspection team

Brian Netto, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Joanna Rand

Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- Rowans Primary is smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- Children attending the early year's provision are taught part time in the Nursery and full time in the Reception year.
- The large majority of pupils are from White British backgrounds. About a third are of minority ethnic heritage. About half of these pupils speak English as an additional language. The largest minority ethnic group is of White European heritage.
- An average proportion of pupils are supported by the pupil premium, which is additional funding for disadvantaged pupils who are looked after by the local authority or known to be eligible for free school meals.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is above the national average.
- An on-site pre-school uses the school's Nursery accommodation in the afternoon. This is inspected separately.
- A small number of pupils attend alternative provision at another Hertfordshire Primary School, Bowmansgreen.
- The school provides a breakfast club which is managed by the governing body.
- The school meets the government's current floor standard, which is the minimum expectation for pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 6.
- The school appointed the headteacher in September 2014 and the deputy headteacher in January 2015. All but three teachers are recent appointments. A school business manager was appointed in September 2014.

### What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Make teaching at least good so that pupils make good progress in writing and mathematics by:
  - making sure that activities are challenging for pupils of all abilities
  - making more effective checks on what the pupils are learning and keeping accurate records of their attainment
  - providing more opportunities for pupils to use and apply their calculation skills in problem solving and investigations
  - raising expectations so that pupils take more pride in the presentation of their work
  - making sure that marking and feedback help pupils to correct and improve their work and deepen their understanding.
- Ensure that leaders, managers and governors make better use of information about how well the pupils are doing to improve teaching and accelerate progress.
- Enable children in the early years provision to make better progress by helping them choose activities which sustain their interests, engage them and make better use of the outdoor areas.
- Raise attendance to at least the national average.

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

## Inspection judgements

### The leadership and management requires improvement

- Leaders have not made effective use of information on how well the pupils are achieving. This has meant that until recently they have not had an accurate view of the school's performance and, consequently, have not held teachers to account for the progress of pupils in their care.
- Leaders have not secured good progress from pupils' different starting points over the last two years because they have not tackled weaknesses in teaching robustly enough. They have also not ensured that teachers keep accurate checks on what their pupils are learning. Recent improvements now ensure that checks are regular and accurate.
- In the short time she has been in post, the headteacher has raised expectations of all staff of what pupils can achieve. Recent appointments have helped to secure improved provision in the early years and better financial management. Staff now share a common ambition to improve teaching and accelerate progress.
- The headteacher has introduced better ways of checking on learning and the performance of teachers. This has resulted in a more accurate and realistic appreciation of the school's strengths and limitations. Pay increases are only justified by pupils' good progress.
- The headteacher has made sure that behaviour is managed consistently throughout the school as this was a concern when she took up her post. As one member of staff said, 'Behaviour has improved out of sight.' There is a positive climate for learning and as a result teaching is improving.
- Weekly communication between staff helps to ensure that pupils educated elsewhere are well looked after, improving their behaviour and achieving well.
- Subject leaders are helping teachers make more effective use of information on how well pupils are achieving. This is beginning to bring about improvements as teachers' plans take more account of what pupils already know.
- Pupils are encouraged to learn about rights and responsibilities. They vote for their peers to be part of the school council and house captains, and learn how democracy works. Topics in the curriculum provide opportunities for pupils to study faiths and lifestyles different to their own. Regular celebrations such as for Remembrance Day and St George's Day help them understand values common within the United Kingdom. This makes a good contribution to their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- The school makes effective use of the pupil premium in supporting disadvantaged pupils. Funds are spent on ensuring that they make progress in line with that of their peers, and can take part in all activities including visits and after-school clubs.
- The school makes effective use of the primary sport funding. Partnership with a local secondary school and expert sports coaches help the pupils to experience a wider range of sports. Teachers' confidence in teaching physical education has also been strengthened.
- The school provides opportunities for all pupils, including disadvantaged pupils, to take part in after-school clubs and visits. Any form of discrimination is not tolerated. This helps the school to be friendly and an inclusive place to learn, and to promote equality of opportunity effectively.
- The majority of parents who completed the online survey, Parent View, think their children are happy and kept safe in the school. A small number expressed concerns for example about bullying. Inspectors found no evidence to support this, as pupils are kept safe and know what to do if they have concerns about bullying.

- The school's arrangements for safeguarding meet statutory requirements. Appropriate checks are made on all staff and visitors to the school.
- The local authority has provided support for teachers in writing and mathematics. This has helped teachers, many of whom are new to the school, to improve their teaching in these subjects.
- **The governance of the school:**
  - Until the appointment of the new headteacher, governors were unable to hold leaders to account. They relied too heavily on information provided by the school, and did not fully understand how well the performance of the school compared with that of other schools.
  - Recent appointments to the staff have enabled governors to make better checks on the school. They are kept well informed by the headteacher. Regular visits provide them with first-hand knowledge and they take every opportunity to expand their understanding through training. For example, several have completed training in safeguarding and recruitment, and in understanding data on pupils' achievement. They are now familiar with the Ofsted 'dashboard' and how the school compares with others.
  - Governors' oversight of the school's finances has greatly improved since the business manager was appointed. They have a good knowledge of how pupil premium funding is spent and how this enables disadvantaged pupils to achieve as well as their peers. Governors understand how the primary sports premium is giving more pupils the chance to take part in sports and how teachers are more confident in teaching physical education. They ensure that resources within the school are allocated appropriately.
  - The Chair and the Vice-Chair of the Governing Body meet regularly with the headteacher so that more-careful checks are made on what actions have been taken to improve the school. They have supported the headteacher in ensuring that teachers' pay increases are linked directly to pupils' progress.
  - Governors ensure that safeguarding arrangements meet requirements.

## The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

### Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Information from the school shows that it has improved significantly since September 2014. Pupils and parents agree. Pupils are friendly and show a great deal of kindness to visitors and to their peers. They work and play well together and relationships are strong.
- Pupils have positive attitudes towards learning. As one said, 'Even the boring stuff is fun!' Their pride in the school is reflected in the care that most pupils take in presenting their work. However, some are careless and their work is untidy and left uncorrected.
- The staff have worked hard to help pupils develop behaviour that supports their learning. This means that no time is wasted as pupils are ready to learn from the start of the lesson. One parent was impressed by the progress made by her child in recent months and their enthusiasm, and added, 'More importantly, it is the underlying learning behaviour that has impressed me more.'
- Pupils understand that bullying can be harmful. They say that it is rare in the school and have every confidence that adults will help them resolve minor differences. Pupils in Year 6 support others by identifying what things can be done if pupils are bullied. 'Buddies' in the playground help pupils to get on with each other.
- Rewards in assemblies help promote the school's commitment to improving attendance. However, this is below the national average. Too many pupils miss school or arrive late.

### Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Pupils say that they are helped to understand personal safety and how to be careful around strangers, for example, during Hallowe'en. They have a good awareness of road safety through talks in assembly from police officers.
- The school takes every care to check staff when appointed to the school using the government's recent guidance. Effective procedures for signing in and out help the school to be a safe place.

- Many pupils take advantage of the breakfast club. This provides a warm and secure start to the day. Adults take this opportunity to help pupils develop their social skills as they eat and play together, and talk about making healthy choices.

### The quality of teaching

### requires improvement

- Teaching is not effective enough in writing and mathematics, so pupils do not make good progress.
- Teachers have not checked pupils' progress effectively and this means that their records are inaccurate. Better ways of checking progress have been recently introduced and this is beginning to give teachers a better idea of how well pupils are doing.
- Some teachers mark work thoroughly and give clear guidance to pupils about what they need to do to improve it. Targets are set so pupils can see how well they are achieving. This practice is not consistently applied, as teachers do not always help pupils to identify errors and make corrections.
- Not all teachers expect pupils to take enough care with the presentation of their work. As a result, some work is untidy and left uncorrected.
- In some classes, teachers take account of what the pupils already know to plan activities which challenge them further. These tasks help some pupils to accelerate their progress, particularly the most able. In other classes, tasks are too easy or too difficult because teachers do not plan them effectively, especially in writing and mathematics.
- Teachers provide opportunities for pupils to practise their calculation skills. However, not all teachers plan activities which help pupils apply their calculation skills in investigations to solve problems.
- When teachers take account of what pupils already know, pupils learn effectively because the planned activities provide the right level of challenge for pupils of different abilities. Pupils in Year 4, for example, were able to add and subtract fractions confidently because the teacher's questions developed the pupils' ideas further and challenged their thinking.
- Pupils develop a strong love of reading and are encouraged to read regularly. Effective teaching helps pupils use their understanding of phonics (letters and the sounds they make) to read unfamiliar words successfully. Even the weaker readers do this with confidence. Teachers teach correct pronunciation and make reading fun so pupils thoroughly enjoy phonics.
- Reading is taught well in Key Stage 2. Pupils in Year 6 were able to understand a range of different science fiction stories as adults directed their reading effectively. Well-designed tasks helped the pupils look more closely at the stories to deepen their understanding.
- Teaching assistants provide good support in lessons. They help to ensure that pupils do not fall behind, by working with them on activities so they achieve well. This helps lessons proceed with little or no interruption.

### The achievement of pupils

### requires improvement

- Achievement requires improvement as pupils' progress in writing and mathematics is not good.
- Pupils' attainment at the end of Year 2 and Year 6 has been around the national average in reading, writing and mathematics for three years. Pupils make better progress in reading as they develop skill through regular opportunities to read. They read widely for pleasure and for research.
- Pupils' progress in mathematics in Year 6 in 2014 was below that expected of pupils their age, though it was as expected in reading and writing. Pupils currently in the school are now making good progress in

mathematics.

- Pupils' results in the phonics (letters and their sounds) screening check in Year 1 have been around the national average for the last two years.
- There were too few disadvantaged pupils in Year 6 to comment on their achievement without identifying them. Information provided by the school shows that disadvantaged pupils across the school make progress in line with that of their peers.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs are given good support. As a result, they make good progress from their starting points.
- Pupils who speak English as an additional language, including those from White European backgrounds, make progress in line with that of their peers. Teachers and teaching assistants make sure that they are given activities which develop their confidence in speaking English so they settle quickly.
- The most-able pupils make progress similar to that of their peers because they take on more difficult tasks, often choosing to do so themselves. In 2014, their overall attainment was similar to that found nationally at the higher levels. They did better in mathematics than in reading and writing at the end of Year 2, and better in reading and writing than in mathematics at the end of Year 6.
- Pupils educated off-site are well cared for. Regular contact from the headteacher ensures that the school is kept informed of their improving progress and behaviour.

### **The early years provision**

### **requires improvement**

- Most children start in the Nursery and the Reception year with skills and knowledge that are typical for their ages. The proportion reaching a good level of development is around national expectations. However, not enough make good progress so their achievement requires improvement.
- The early years provision requires improvement because children are not given enough time on each activity to improve their skills, explore or investigate so that they deepen their understanding. This has meant that some children are not well enough prepared for the next stage of their learning in Year 1.
- Opportunities to develop children's physical and personal skills, for example, are limited as the outdoor area is not used well, especially in the afternoon when the main area is used by the pre-school and is not used by children in the Reception class. Leaders have plans to develop the outdoor space so that it can be used more by children in Reception.
- Teaching is generally good. Typically, teaching is strongest when children are taught together. Children showed excitement in the Nursery, for example, when they recalled the characters and themes from a range of traditional fairy tales. Clever questioning helped them to develop a better understanding of the different stories. Teaching is not as effective when children choose activities and work independently. Too little attention is given to helping children learn through exploring the activities, particularly through talk and questioning to deepen their understanding.
- Good links have been established with the pre-school and the local children's centre, and teachers make visits to other local pre-schools. Parents are encouraged to be involved in their children's learning and many contribute special moments to their child's 'learning journey'. This book records the skills acquired by the children, both at home and in school.
- The leadership of the early years requires improvement as changes made have had limited time to make a difference to the progress of the children. Leadership has improved since the arrival of the deputy headteacher in January 2015. The Nursery and Reception staff work well together so that children mix well, and the younger ones develop more quickly. Children quickly get used to routines, and this help to ensure they are kept safe, behave well, and little time is wasted.

## 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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	117257
<b>Local authority</b>	Hertfordshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	456045

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	200
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Lisa Woodrow
<b>Headteacher</b>	Joanne Reed
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	14 May 2012
<b>Telephone number</b>	01707 321203
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