

Rockland St Mary Primary School

School Lane, Rockland St Mary, Norwich, NR14 7EU

Inspection dates 23–24 April 2015

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	Requires improvement	3
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

- Pupils’ achievement has not been high enough since the last inspection. Teaching has not been good enough to ensure that pupils achieve well in reading, writing and mathematics, and their progress varies too much from class to class.
- Teachers do not always provide pupils, especially the most able, with activities that challenge them.
- Teachers’ marking, though improving recently, has not provided pupils with clear feedback on their learning and what they can do to advance to the next level.
- Pupils do not make enough progress in writing. Not all teachers insist that pupils present their written work well or develop their basic writing skills effectively.
- Until recently, governors were not given enough information to fulfil their roles and responsibilities effectively.
- The actions taken by leaders and governors have not been sufficiently effective to improve teaching and achievement.
- New subject leaders have not yet developed their skills in monitoring and evaluating teaching or analysing assessment information so as to raise achievement in their areas of responsibility.
- Teachers in the early years do not always plan opportunities to extend children’s learning quickly enough. The limited size and quality of the outdoor provision restrict the opportunities for learning.

The school has the following strengths

- Pupils enjoy school and their attendance is above average. They behave well and feel safe as a result of the robust systems applied to ensure they are safe and secure.
- Governors have worked in close cooperation with the local authority to ensure the smooth running of the school in the absence of a permanent headteacher. With the interim headteacher, they have tackled weak teaching and are committed to improving the school.
- The school promotes pupils’ spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well.
- Pupils’ reading skills are improving. The results of the 2014 Year 1 check on phonics (letters and sounds) were above average.
- The interim executive headteacher has clearly identified where improvements are needed. Recent improvements in leadership and teaching are ensuring that achievement is rising.

Information about this inspection

- This inspection was coordinated with that of the other school in the federation, Surlingham Primary School.
- The inspector observed teaching and learning in eight lessons, three of which were observed jointly with the interim executive headteacher. In addition, the inspector made a number of shorter visits to lessons.
- The inspector held discussions with school leaders, staff, governors and two representatives of the local authority.
- The inspector observed the school's work and looked at documentation including: school improvement plans; the systems for assessing pupils' current progress; the arrangements for safeguarding pupils; and samples of pupils' work. She heard groups of pupils read, observed them in an assembly and spoke with pupils about behaviour and the safety arrangements at the school.
- The 20 parental responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) were taken into account. The inspector spoke with some parents at the school.
- The views expressed by the nine staff who responded to the staff questionnaire were also considered.

Inspection team

Susan Thomas-Pounce, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Rockland St Mary is smaller than the average-sized primary school. The school is part of The Three Rivers Federation with Surlingham Primary School. These schools share the same interim executive headteacher and the same governing body. Other leadership roles are also shared. The school also has less formal links with other schools in the area.
- There has been significant change in leadership since the previous inspection. Currently, the school is led and managed by an interim executive headteacher who was appointed in January 2015.
- Most pupils are of White British heritage.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils for whom the pupil premium provides support is much lower than that found nationally and varies considerably from year to year. This funding is used to support pupils in care and those who are known to be eligible for free school meals.
- The proportion of disabled pupils or those who have special educational needs is in line with the national average.
- Children in the early years attend on a full-time basis. Most pupils are taught in mixed-age classes.
- Increasing numbers of pupils each year join partway through their primary school education.
- There were too few pupils in Year 6 in 2014 to qualify for the usual judgement on government floor standards. These are the minimum expectations for pupils' progress and attainment in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 6.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching and learning throughout the school by:
 - providing more challenge in the learning of all groups of pupils, especially the most able
 - implementing the school's marking policy consistently and sharing existing good practice so that all pupils benefit from meaningful advice and guidance on how to advance their learning
 - ensuring that pupils act on the guidance given to them by teachers in their marking and other feedback in order to improve their work
 - developing the outdoor area in the early years and increasing the opportunities and space for children to explore and learn.
- Raise pupils' achievement in writing by:
 - regularly teaching basic skills of handwriting, spelling and punctuation as well as emphasising the importance of the presentation of high quality work
 - ensuring that lessons build on previous learning so that pupils develop their written skills systematically and progressively.
- Develop the effectiveness of the new subject leaders by enabling them to improve their:
 - expertise in analysing information on pupils' attainment and progress
 - monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning in order to raise achievement.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management requires improvement

- Despite recent improvements, leaders have not done enough to maintain good teaching and achievement as the norm. Instability in leadership has contributed to the slow identification of weaknesses in teaching and learning and insufficient action taken to resolve them. Although the school has continued to promote good behaviour, pupils are not yet making consistently good progress.
- Since her appointment in January this year, the interim executive headteacher has ensured that the school's systems for managing staff performance are robust and focused. There is now a close link between teachers' past performance and their pay rises and promotion. Targets set to improve teachers' performance are closely linked to pupils' progress and to whole-school priorities set out in the detailed school development plan. Teachers report that they are provided with regular and focused training that is starting to have an impact on their daily work.
- Recently, new subject leaders across the federation have been well supported through training and guidance from the interim executive headteacher and the local authority. Consequently, they are beginning to take on responsibility for checking on teaching and learning in their subjects and are clear about what they need to do to improve teaching and achievement. However, their skills are, as yet, underdeveloped and their impact on improvement limited.
- Progress across many areas of the school's work over the last term shows that it has the capacity for further improvement. The interim executive headteacher has quickly gained the confidence of the staff, correctly focusing on improving the quality of teaching by ensuring that teachers are more aware of what they need to do to improve their practice. Her monitoring of teaching and learning is thorough and astute. There is already some clear evidence of improvements in teaching.
- Additional funding to boost the attainment and progress of disadvantaged pupils is used effectively across the school. As a result, their academic and personal development is strengthening and they are currently achieving at similar levels to their peers.
- The sport premium funding is used effectively to widen the range of available sporting activities including, kayaking, canoeing and sailing. Pupils are encouraged to engage in competition beyond the school and participation in sports has increased as a result. This is helping pupils to develop more healthy lifestyles.
- The curriculum gives pupils interesting topics to study. However, writing remains a weakness and the most able pupils have insufficient opportunities to do work that broadens their experiences by using their more advanced skills. Extra-curricular clubs are well attended. Pupils are prepared well for life in modern Britain. Core values such as honesty, respect and tolerance and the concepts behind democracy are fostered throughout the school. Pupils are well equipped for the next stage in their education because of the many opportunities the school provides to develop their social, moral, cultural and spiritual understanding.
- Leaders make sure pupils of all abilities and from all backgrounds have an equal opportunity to succeed, particularly by ensuring that they all have access to different activities. This results in pupils and their parents valuing what the school offers. Discrimination is not acceptable in this school.
- Collaborative work across the federation is useful and enables staff to share best practice. Staff from both schools have worked closely together to identify strengths and weaknesses and to establish appropriate priorities for improvement.
- During the last few terms, the school has been well supported by the local authority. It continues to provide good support in driving up standards and in building capacity to improve further. Since the appointment of the interim executive headteacher and new Chair of the Governing Body, leadership and management have improved, staff morale is high and there is a strong drive for further improvement.
- Links with parents and the community are good. Those who responded to Parent View or were spoken to

by the inspector were rightly very positive about the way the school cares for their children.

■ The governance of the school:

- Governors have taken decisive action to reverse the school's decline and to build leadership capacity. Their effectiveness has been reviewed within the federation and they are currently receiving further training, particularly from the local authority. As a result they are more confident and competent in carrying out their roles and responsibilities, but realise that they can further improve their effectiveness.
- Governors bring to the school a range of relevant skills and expertise that help them to hold leaders to account for pupils' achievement. They work in close partnership with the interim executive headteacher, and take an active role in establishing the strategic direction of the school.
- Governors have a clear understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school, including how well pupils' performance compares with that of other schools. They are aware of the improvements required in teaching and how they are being tackled, and are involved in the management of staff performance.
- The governors have undertaken focused visits to evaluate the impact of the actions taken to implement the school development plan. For example, they check pupils' attitudes to learning and review their books to gauge the impact of teachers' marking.
- The minutes of governing body meetings show evidence of the challenge they present to leaders. For example, governors examine closely the impact of spending such as the sports funding and the pupil premium.
- Governors ensure that the arrangements for safeguarding pupils, including checks on staff, fully meet statutory requirements. Procedures are robust and effective. The school site is well maintained and staff are vigilant in following up any concerns.

The behaviour and safety of pupils

are good

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Pupils appreciate the supportive relationships that exist across the school. The well-organised playtimes, with plenty of play equipment, ensure pupils play happily together.
- Pupils' attitudes to learning are positive and any form of disruption to lessons is rare. Pupils are friendly and know what is expected of them in and out of lessons. They like using the 'steps to success' system to help them decide if they have reached the targets set for them, and this gives them a good understanding of how well they are doing.
- Most staff and parents who responded to the school's questionnaires believe that pupils' behaviour is good and that any inappropriate behaviour is dealt with effectively. There have been no recent exclusions. School records show that when pupils have needed firm support they have responded positively. Pupils who spoke to the inspector said that most pupils behave well.
- Pupils eagerly undertake team responsibilities around the school. For example, taking the lead as school councillors, gardeners and 'eco warriors' ensures that all pupils contribute positively to school life. Pupils have a good understanding of other cultures and faiths. Through visits to different places of worship, they have a good understanding of their place in multicultural Britain and the wider world.
- On the few occasions when teaching fails to stimulate their interest or does not challenge them enough, a few pupils lose concentration and need reminders from staff to focus more on their work. This is particularly so for the most-able pupils, who sometimes finish tasks quickly and have to wait too long for additional challenges. Their good attitudes to learning, however, ensure that any distraction does not lead to disruptive behaviour.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Parents and staff agree that pupils are safe and well looked after.
- All staff are diligent in the way they supervise pupils both in and out of school. Staff are checked

rigorously prior to appointment and health and safety procedures are implemented consistently and regularly reviewed to keep pupils safe.

- Pupils' above-average attendance reflects their enjoyment of school. They feel safe and valued as members of the school community.
- Pupils are well informed about the dangers they might face, and how to keep themselves safe. For example, they know about the dangers strangers may pose, and how to be careful when using the internet.
- Pupils have a good understanding of the different forms that bullying can take, including, for example, verbal, racist and cyber bullying. They say that incidents of bullying are rare and that should any occur they have no hesitation in contacting staff, confident that any member of staff would deal with such behaviour effectively.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- Although the quality of teaching has improved, it is still not sufficiently effective over time to ensure that all pupils make good progress. This is particularly the case in writing.
- Under the new leadership, staff have rapidly gained good knowledge of each pupil's attainment and progress. As a result, current pupils' achievement is strengthening steadily because staff are matching the work provided more closely to pupils' abilities. Within this positive picture, weaknesses remain. For example, teachers' marking, while regular and positive, does not always provide pupils with meaningful feedback on their learning and how they can move forward swiftly. On the occasions when good feedback is provided, teachers do not always make sure that pupils act on that advice.
- In some lessons, tasks are not always geared to ensuring that pupils are challenged consistently. Pupils of different abilities are, at times, given the same activity. In these cases, the most able often finish quickly because they are not challenged well enough. As a result, their progress is limited and they are not fully engaged in learning.
- Although teaching is supporting better progress in reading and mathematics, writing lags behind. Progress in writing is slower because the work provided does not always build on previous learning and is not consistently planned at the right level to challenge all abilities and focus on sharpening their basic skills. Pupils make too many errors in their spelling and it is not corrected consistently across subjects. Teachers do not all insist on good handwriting and presentation, so these aspects of writing vary too much in quality.
- The teaching of reading is good. Pupils are skilfully taught phonics from an early age and this helps them to read unfamiliar words. As a result, pupils quickly develop the skills to read texts that are appropriate for their ability. Key Stage 1 pupils who read to the inspector and their reading 'buddies' confidently demonstrated how well they used this method to work out unfamiliar words. Teachers ensure that pupils read frequently and that they read regularly to an adult in school.
- Teachers show high expectations of pupils' behaviour. Relationships are positive and pupils want to please their teachers. Good attitudes to learning start in the early years. In all subjects, pupils learn to take turns and to respect each other's views.
- Pupils' books show that some good teaching is helping them to make better progress, including in writing. In a lesson in Years 5 and 6, pupils listened with interest as they discussed how they would write a persuasive letter to save the environment. Learning was good for all as they developed their understanding of structuring their writing. The teachers used information about pupils' previous attainment accurately to plan activities, so pupils of all abilities and groups made good progress because they were effectively supported and able to move on at their own different levels.
- Generally, teachers use extra help and additional resources in class effectively to support the learning of

individual pupils, including disadvantaged pupils.

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Pupils' progress is not rapid enough. As pupil numbers in each year group are relatively small, comparisons with national averages can be unreliable. However, assessments at the end of Year 6 and school checks of pupils' developing skills show that pupils' progress has fluctuated over time.
- Positive action taken by the interim executive headteacher is beginning to address the legacy of mediocre achievement over time. Improvements in teaching, alongside better use of information about what pupils can do, are helping to raise achievement.
- For the past two years, standards in Key Stage 1 have been below those attained in most schools. Although attainment improved in 2014, it was not strong in writing or in mathematics. In 2014, standards in writing at the end of Year 6 were not high enough and depressed the overall level for English. Progress was not strong in any subject, and particularly weak in writing.
- The progress of the most-able pupils currently in school, although improving, still varies too much between subjects and classes. Recent improvements in teaching are beginning to address the legacy of underperformance of the most able but teachers are not yet all providing demanding work for these pupils in all classes. No pupils in Year 6 attained the higher levels in the 2014 national tests in writing, although some did so in reading and mathematics.
- In 2014, there were too few disadvantaged pupils in Year 6 for their attainment and progress to be reported without risk of identifying them. Additional funding is being used well so that all learners, including disadvantaged pupils, are currently making better progress.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs are making better progress with additional support provided in class. Over time, their progress has been no better than that of most other pupils.
- Although the actions taken by leaders are leading to improvements in pupils' writing, it still varies too much across the school. Many pupils lack sufficient skills of handwriting, spelling and punctuation to enable them to write fluently and at length. Additionally, the standard of presentation of work in books is not high enough. Teachers do not always enable pupils to build on previous learning and so they do not consolidate their written skills well enough.
- The teaching of phonics is effective. As a result, a higher proportion of pupils in Year 1 met the expected standard in the phonic screening check than seen nationally. Older pupils tackle texts with confidence and become fluent readers.
- Pupils generally make expected progress in mathematics, and occasionally it is good. This is because they have an adequate grasp of basic number skills, which they use to carry out calculations and to solve problems. They enjoy the subject.
- The school's assessment information on pupils' progress and their work in books show that progress in reading, writing and mathematics is continuing to improve. Pupils are currently working at higher standards than in recent years, reflecting the positive impact of recent changes.

The early years provision

requires improvement

- In such small year groups, children's knowledge and skills when they join the school vary widely. Overall, however, they are below the levels typical for their age, particularly in reading and writing.
- In 2013, the proportion of children achieving a good level of development at the end of the Reception Year was below the national average. These pupils are currently catching up in Key Stage 1. Children

made good progress in 2014 and the number of children assessed with a good level of development improved to just above average.

- Over time, children have not made consistently good progress in all areas of learning. However, the early years leader, ably supported by the interim executive headteacher, is working determinedly to boost levels of achievement. Early indications show that children's learning is accelerating and those who arrive with lower levels of skills are beginning to catch up with their peers, particularly in reading and writing. Consequently, children are developing the skills and attitudes necessary to move to Year 1 successfully.
- Despite recent changes, the quality of leadership and teaching requires improvement. Teaching is getting better but children are not always challenged enough. Until recently, limitations in leaders' systems to track children's progress meant that staff had too little information about how to match activities to all children's needs, abilities and interests. This has led to some children underperforming. Although staff use the limited outdoor space well, children have more opportunities to extend their learning indoors than outside. Staff recognise the limitations of the outdoor area and have plans for improvement.
- Children learn to adopt very good manners towards each other and the adults around them. They take turns to play with different equipment and automatically say 'please' and 'thank you' when sharing. They behave well in lessons and during breaks. Children make very good progress in developing self-confidence, self-awareness, and health and self-care. Children learn in a safe environment and parents say that their children feel safe and secure.

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	120846
Local authority	Norfolk
Inspection number	461856

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	66
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Evelyn Hicks
Headteacher	Rosemary Kett (Interim Executive Headteacher)
Date of previous school inspection	3 November 2011
Telephone number	01508 538345
Fax number	01508 538345
Email address	office@rockland-st-mary.norfolk.sch.uk

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