

John Ray Junior School

Notley Road, Braintree, Essex, CM7 1HL

Inspection dates

27–28 January 2016

Overall effectiveness

Inadequate

Effectiveness of leadership and management	Requires improvement
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Inadequate
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Inadequate
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an inadequate school

- Too many pupils do not achieve well enough because the overall quality of teaching is inadequate.
- Until very recently, leaders, including governors, have failed to provide sufficient challenge to the school. Consequently, standards have been in slow decline for a number of years.
- Pupils throughout Key Stage 2 are not making enough progress in reading, writing and mathematics. Results in national tests have been significantly below those expected and improvements are too slow.
- All groups of pupils underachieve, including the most able and pupils who have special educational needs or disability.
- Senior leaders and governors have not, until very recently, used the pupil premium funding effectively to help disadvantaged pupils achieve well enough.
- Assessment information is not used consistently well to pitch work at the right level. Pupils are not always challenged to do their best.
- The teaching of reading requires improvement, particularly in lower Key Stage 2. Too many pupils are not developing a love of reading or practising their skills deeply enough.
- Teachers do not effectively question pupils to deepen understanding. Most-able pupils are not challenged to think or produce work that extends their skills and abilities. This is particularly the case in mathematics.
- Teachers' feedback is regular but it is not effective in helping pupils to make faster progress.
- Teachers do not plan lessons well enough to meet the needs of pupils. This results in too many pupils making less progress than that of which they are capable.
- Pupils work steadily, rather than quickly and purposefully, because teachers do not have high enough expectations of what they are capable of doing.
- Pupils do not experience enough of the national curriculum to help them acquire the skills and abilities needed for the next stage of their education.

The school has the following strengths

- New senior leaders are now rigorously tackling the underachievement of all pupils. They set high expectations of staff and pupils. They are halting the decline in pupils' progress.
- Sports provision at the school is good. Pupils enjoy quality provision and are taught well.
- Behaviour of pupils is good. The vast majority are keen to learn and try hard in their lessons.
- The relationship between adults and pupils is very caring. Pupils feel safe and well looked after.

Full report

In accordance with the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires significant improvement, because it is performing significantly less well than it might in all the circumstances reasonably be expected to perform.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching and learning by:
 - eradicating weak teaching that impedes pupils' progress, in English and mathematics
 - planning interesting lessons that stimulate learning and make pupils think and persevere, particularly in mathematics
 - using assessment information precisely to plan learning that meets the needs of pupils at different ability levels
 - ensuring that the evidence in pupils' books illustrates that they make good progress over time, work hard and apply their knowledge and skills in a variety of ways
 - improving the teaching of reading across the curriculum so pupils develop a love of reading and progress further.
- Raise pupils' outcomes by:
 - rapidly increasing the number of pupils who make good or better progress in reading, writing and mathematics, so pupils achieve at least as well as others nationally by the end of Key Stage 2
 - urgently raising the achievement of the disadvantaged and most vulnerable pupils in the school and closing the gap with other pupils nationally
 - ensuring that all staff provide precise support for pupils and those who have special educational needs or disability so they can achieve the best they can
 - providing greater challenge for the most-able pupils so they can exceed national expectations in all subjects
 - consolidating the use of newly introduced procedures in reading to enable more pupils to excel
 - improving the accuracy and systematic use of assessment information so that staff focus more sharply on how well pupils are learning and the progress they are making.
- Improve leadership and management by:
 - providing high-quality training for all staff and managers so they can undertake their roles and responsibilities effectively
 - analysing the impact of the improvements made in accelerating the achievement of pupils
 - ensuring that governors are given the necessary information to hold the school fully to account for raising standards of education for pupils.

An external review of the school's use of pupil premium should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of the leadership and management may be improved.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management requires improvement

- Since the last inspection, the leadership of the school has failed to ensure that pupils achieve well enough in their education and standards have been in slow decline over a number of years.
- This academic year, there have been significant changes to the leadership of the school. The new acting headteacher, who began in September, has brought a clear vision and energy to school improvement. Recently, an executive headteacher from a neighbouring school is also adding further support and expertise. Changes are now moving at pace. The focus has rightly been on ensuring that all pupils are safe and have good behaviour during the school day. This, school leaders have quickly achieved.
- Senior leaders have a clear sense of direction, purpose and capacity to improve the outcomes for pupils. They are accurate and self-critical when identifying strengths and weaknesses. Consequently, their action plan is focused on the correct priorities for swiftly improving teaching and learning in all year groups.
- The effective use of the additional money for disadvantaged pupils requires review. Over the past few years it is not clear how this money has been spent or how its impact has been monitored. The proportion of disadvantaged pupils who do not succeed has remained largely unchecked until this academic year. Disadvantaged pupils achieve poorly when compared with other pupils nationally.
- Performance management has not been robust enough for teachers. Consequently, for some teachers, they have not focused or received enough training on the areas required to ensure that teaching and learning is effective. This year, the acting headteacher has set appropriate targets for teachers. They are now held more rigorously to account for the performance of pupils in their class. Where teaching is not reaching the expected quality, senior leaders are taking swift action to support teachers and challenge poor practice.
- Middle leaders are new to their positions. They model strong practice in the classrooms and have the capacity to lead the necessary improvements to teaching and learning. They are currently receiving external support to develop their effectiveness in their leadership roles. As a result, middle leaders have strong subject plans in place, and training for staff is underway.
- The impact of work to improve the curriculum, particularly the teaching of English and mathematics, is still too new to comment on. In other subject areas, too often teachers do not plan learning for pupils to fully enjoy and make the progress they are capable of. Pupils enjoy practical learning. In one history lesson seen, pupils were enthralled by a visiting speaker who spoke about archaeology. They participated fully in a mock excavation dig, skilfully communicating their ideas using correct terminology.
- The local authority issued a warning notice to the school due to concerns about the decline in pupil outcomes and is supporting the school fully on its journey towards being a good school once again. The local authority is aware of the previous failings of the school and offers a wide range of suitable support to train and develop staff, managers and governors to drive school improvement and to accelerate pupils' progress.
- Senior leaders are ensuring that spiritual, moral, social and cultural education is a priority and effective in the school. They promote moral values and inclusivity during assembly times and through the many high-quality displays around the school. Pupils speak confidently about the change in the school and how they appreciate having values to follow. As a result, pupils respond in friendly and tolerant ways to each other and adults. They are being well prepared for life in modern Britain.
- The provision in sports is a strength of the school. The additional sports premium funding contributes to the cost of a sports technician so that the pupils have access to quality teaching. In one lesson seen, every pupil was participating in teamwork and increasing skills. They were given individual feedback and coaching to improve to achieve instant success.
- **The governance of the school**
 - Until this academic year, governors have relied too heavily on the summary information given to them from the headteacher. This has resulted in the outcomes for pupils steadily declining without robust intervention or challenge. Teachers have not been supported with effective performance management and continuous professional development to ensure that teaching over time remains good.
 - Following a recent external review of governance, the local authority is supporting the school with an improvement board that oversees the governance of the school. Minutes of meetings now clearly demonstrate that members of the board challenge school leaders regarding raising the standard of education for pupils in the school. Governors now carry out their statutory duties fully.

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. There is a strong focus on keeping pupils safe. Staff are trained and record concerns in a timely way. Issues relating to child protection are meticulously dealt with and recorded. The work of the pastoral team in supporting vulnerable families is effective.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment is inadequate

- Progress in pupils' books and the school's assessment information for all year groups indicate that the quality of teaching over time has been too variable, with teaching being less effective in lower Key Stage 2. As a result, older pupils have not made the progress of which they are capable. Changes to the quality of planning, appropriateness of resources and quality of feedback have been too recent to show sufficient impact.
- Work and resources are not planned carefully to challenge and support pupils of different abilities. Too many teachers do not have high expectations of what pupils can achieve. As a result, pupils are often unchallenged as the work does not extend or stretch them in line with their abilities, or support the less able.
- Teachers explain what pupils are doing but do not show pupils how they can achieve their best or how they can extend their learning. For example, in one lesson, pupils knew they were learning about compound and complex sentences, but after the teaching time, they still did not know the difference between the two.
- In mathematics, too many teachers do not explain the learning but focus on tasks. They do not provide sufficient challenge for able pupils to extend their mathematics knowledge and apply their skills in a range of interesting ways. As a consequence, the able mathematicians do not make the accelerated progress of which they are capable. In books seen, these pupils produce work that requires more of the same skill rather than deepening their knowledge and understanding.
- Teachers' questioning too often focuses on pupils retrieving facts rather than deepening and exploring their understanding further. Pupils' misunderstandings are not systematically checked and often go missed until the end of the lesson.
- Teachers provide feedback and some provide guidance on what each pupil needs to do next to improve further. Recently, leaders have altered the school day and pupils now come into school early to complete the improvements to their work. It is too early to assess impact, but pupils are now responding well to the general feedback they are given.
- Additional adults are sometimes used effectively to support individuals or small groups. Where they are, these adults promote discussion and help individuals make better progress through skilful questioning. This is not consistent across the school.
- In subjects other than English and mathematics, pupils often have a richer experience. In physical education lessons, pupils are expected to fully participate, and receive quality feedback and coaching to develop their skills. In these lessons, pupils are able to show their best with great enthusiasm. Visiting speakers and trips to local museums enhance pupils' experience of subjects such as history and religious education.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

are good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils understand and willingly follow the school values that have been introduced in their assemblies and in personal, social and health education. A pupil told the inspectors 'you can use the values to make the school a better place'.
- Pupils' understanding of how to keep safe, particularly online, is a strength. They have clear strategies for using the internet and other forms of technology. Pupils are confident that if any bullying occurs in school, they know who to tell and are confident that it will be dealt with. Although the online questionnaire shows that some parents have concerns about bullying, school records for this year show that it happens rarely and is dealt with promptly.
- The pastoral team know the pupils who require additional support well. They ensure that these potentially more vulnerable pupils are cared for with effective individualised programmes in place. As a result, these

pupils are happy in school, and issues of disruption to learning are anticipated and dealt with effectively.

- Older pupils take on responsibilities and know they should act as good role models. During playtimes, some older pupils are trained to provide games that promote team work and collaboration. Younger pupils enjoy and participate in a wide range of activities during this time.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils are polite and proud of their school. They speak confidently about the improvements they have experienced this year. They very much appreciate the new resources that they are now able to use to help them learn. As a result, in lessons pupils complete activities neatly and to the best of their abilities.
- Pupils conduct themselves well around the school. They hold doors open, acknowledging adults and pupils in a positive and friendly way. During lunchtimes and playtimes, pupils interact well with each other. The lunch hall was a friendly place to visit, with pupils socialising and enjoying the experience.
- Pupils told inspectors that they enjoy school. The vast majority attend and rarely miss a day. For the few that are persistently absent, the school is rigorous in following its duties to both support and challenge parents in ensuring that their child attends school regularly. Attendance overall is good and is currently above national expectations.
- School leaders have had a significant impact on raising standards of behaviour over the autumn term. This has resulted in them using the last sanction of their behaviour policy. Exclusions, both internal and external, have risen as a result. School leaders are now reducing these exclusions as pupils respond to the support they are given. Consequently, lessons proceed without disruption to other pupils' learning.

Outcomes for pupils

are inadequate

- Standards have declined since the last inspection. The school compares unfavourably with other schools nationally for achievement in writing, mathematics, grammar, punctuation and spelling. Currently the gaps in learning for the oldest pupils are too wide for them to catch up quickly enough, even with the wide range of additional support that is now in place. Consequently, a significant proportion of pupils currently on roll are not making the accelerated progress required to reach national standards in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Pupils enter the junior school with skills and abilities that are broadly typical for their age. Too few of the most-able pupils achieve the higher levels, particularly in writing. Pupils are not given enough opportunity to write at length to enable them to develop their skills and enjoyment of writing. This is often the case in subjects other than English.
- Disadvantaged pupils achieve less well than other pupils nationally with gaps widening over time. Pupils start to fall behind from the start of Year 3. In the past, leaders and governors have not effectively planned or used the additional funding to ensure that these pupils make the progress expected. Until recently, leaders have not monitored the progress of disadvantaged pupils rigorously enough. As a result, disadvantaged pupils are not well prepared for the next stage of their education.
- Pupils who have special educational needs or disability do not achieve as well as they should in mathematics, writing, grammar, punctuation and spelling. This is because teachers do not expect enough of these pupils, and their learning activities are not adapted to meet their individual needs.
- Pupils who speak English as an additional language achieve well over time and their attainment in core subjects at least matches that expected nationally.
- In other subject areas, pupils demonstrate their practical skills and abilities well. In lessons such as physical education and science, pupils are enthusiastic and willing to challenge themselves. In these lessons, teachers expect more of pupils and provide interesting and stimulating learning opportunities. As a result, pupils achieve well.

School details

Unique reference number	115028
Local authority	Essex
Inspection number	10009954

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	Community
Age range of pupils	7–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	386
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Peter Hawtin
Headteacher	Maddie Cowley
Telephone number	01376 324107
Website	www.johnrayjuniors.com
Email address	admin@johnray-jun.essex.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	23 January 2013

Information about this school

- John Ray Junior School is larger than an average-sized primary school.
- Most pupils are from White British backgrounds.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs or disability is broadly average. The proportion of pupils who have education, health and care plans or statements is above average.
- The proportion of pupils who are disadvantaged and supported by the pupil premium is average. (The pupil premium provides additional funding for pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals and those looked after by the local authority).
- The proportions of pupils from minority ethnic groups and those who speak English as an additional language are below the national average.
- The school meets the government's minimum floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress by the end of Year 6.

Information about this inspection

- This inspection converted from a short inspection to a full inspection to gather further evidence to determine the effectiveness of the school. Three additional inspectors joined on the second day of inspection.
- Inspectors observed a wide range of learning activities across the school and in a range of subjects. These included 28 visits to lessons. A large number of pupils' books from all classes were scrutinised. Inspectors listened to pupils read.
- Discussions were held with all senior leaders. Inspectors met with middle leaders, the Chair of the Governing Body and representatives of the local authority. Inspectors also met with pupils and spoke to them informally throughout the inspection.
- Inspectors took account of 43 parental responses expressed through the online survey, Parent View.
- The inspection team scrutinised information about pupils' achievement and the assessment of learning. A wide range of documentation used by leaders to evaluate the school's work was considered.
- Twenty-nine responses to the staff questionnaire were evaluated.
- A review of safeguarding records and procedures was carried out.

Inspection team

Kim Hall, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Lynda Beale	Ofsted Inspector
Amanda Godfrey	Ofsted Inspector
Paul Wilson	Ofsted Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 4234
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
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