

# The Ridgeway Primary School

Hillbrow, Reading, Berkshire RG2 8JD

## Inspection dates

7–8 March 2017

Overall effectiveness	Requires improvement
Effectiveness of leadership and management	<b>Requires improvement</b>
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	<b>Requires improvement</b>
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	<b>Good</b>
Outcomes for pupils	<b>Requires improvement</b>
Provision in the early years	<b>Good</b>
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	<b>Good</b>

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This school requires improvement

- The school has been through significant changes since the last inspection and leaders have not sustained the previously good standard of education.
- The quality of teaching is not consistently good across the school. Teachers do not make enough use of assessment information to plan work that is suitably challenging for all pupils.
- Pupils, particularly those in key stage 1, make insufficient progress in reading, writing and mathematics. Few pupils are working at greater depth. Consequently, they fail to reach the higher levels.
- Pupils' handwriting, spelling and punctuation are weak and this prevents them from reading and writing fluently and confidently. There are too few occasions when pupils use their writing and mathematical skills when learning other subjects.
- Not all leaders have a thorough understanding of performance information. The school development plan lacks clarity and precision and not all staff fully understand the main priorities for improvement.
- The systems in place to record and track pupils' progress do not enable teachers to check that pupils make as much progress as they should.
- Although subject leaders visit classrooms regularly to check on the quality of teaching, they do not look closely enough at how well pupils are learning.
- School leaders and governors have taken action to bring about improvement. They have addressed previously weak teaching but know that more needs to be done to secure consistently good teaching across the school.

### The school has the following strengths

- Staff provide good-quality care and support to pupils so that they feel safe in school. Pupils' attendance has improved and is now average.
- Inclusion is a strength of the school. Pupils from all backgrounds enjoy learning and playing together.
- Children in the early years learn well and make good progress.
- The school is bright and attractive and provides a stimulating environment in which pupils learn and play.
- Pupils behave well in school and in the playground. They respect their teachers and respond quickly to instructions.
- The range of sporting opportunities has increased and pupils now take part in a wide range of inter-schools competitions.

## Full report

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

- Improve the quality of teaching so that it is consistently good across the school by ensuring that:
  - all teachers make use of assessment information to plan work that is at a suitable level for all pupils.
  - pupils are able to spell and punctuate their writing accurately and that they write neatly and present their work to the highest possible standard
  - all teachers provide feedback to pupils that helps pupils to improve their work and make more rapid progress.
- Increase pupils' rates of progress in reading, writing and mathematics, by:
  - giving the most able pupils harder work that challenges them and enables them to work at greater depth in all subjects
  - providing more opportunities for pupils to use their writing and mathematical skills when learning other subjects
  - ensuring that pupils are provided with more opportunities to deepen their understanding and gain mastery of subjects, particularly in mathematics.
- Improve leadership and management, by:
  - making sharper use of all performance information to define more precise priorities for school improvement
  - devising systems that measure pupils' progress from their different starting points
  - developing the skills of middle leaders so that they are better equipped to challenge weaker performance
  - broadening the curriculum to ensure that pupils in all classes develop their skills and knowledge in subjects other than English and mathematics.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management

### Requires improvement

- The school has been through a significant period of change since the previous inspection. Upon joining the school in September 2013, the headteacher was heavily involved in expanding the school from a one-form entry to a three-form entry primary school. This entailed overseeing a substantial building project and securing a number of new teaching and non-teaching staff.
- Leaders and governors are passionate about the school but much of their time was diverted by dealing with the expansion of the school. In addition to the building project and securing staff, they also oversaw a substantial rise in pupil numbers, many of whom joined key stage 2 part-way through the academic year.
- School leaders challenge underperformance and this is leading to improvements, particularly in Years 5 and 6. Leaders visit classrooms regularly and they provide feedback to teachers to help them to improve their skills. However, there are still pockets of underperformance, especially in key stage 1, that need to be addressed.
- Several leaders are new to their posts and have yet to fully develop their roles. Subject leaders visit classrooms and they look at work in pupils' books. However, they do not all have the experience to advise on what teachers need to do to improve their skills. When some subject leaders observe teaching, they concentrate too much on what the teacher is doing rather than what exactly pupils learn.
- Current systems for recording and tracking pupils' progress fail to provide sufficient information on pupils' starting points and so leaders do not all have an accurate view of how much progress different groups of pupils make.
- School leaders do not make sharp enough use of all performance information when developing their improvement plans. Some leaders have an overgenerous view of teaching and pupils' progress and so they do not give sufficient attention to where improvements are most needed.
- Some aspects of the curriculum are too narrow because teachers rely too heavily on published schemes. There are too few opportunities for pupils to use their literacy and mathematical skills when learning other subjects. Work in pupils' topic books shows that in some classes they do not cover subjects other than English and mathematics to sufficient depth.
- At the time of the inspection, information on the school's website regarding the curriculum was out of date and the school prospectus was missing. However, this was remedied during the inspection and the website is now compliant.
- Leaders have established good working relationships with the local authority and with their local excellence cluster. This provides them with tailored training programmes that are beginning to bring about improvement. For example, the proportion of pupils reaching the expected standard in phonics has increased year on year. Staff are very positive about the opportunities they have to learn from training and other activities that helps to strengthen their skills.
- Leaders are very aware that they have a small number of pupils whose circumstances may make them more vulnerable. Leaders work in close partnership with families and

external agencies to ensure that these pupils receive the right support in a timely way. Leaders are proud of their inclusive school where all pupils are welcomed regardless of background. They ensure that all pupils are treated equally and fairly and that discrimination on any grounds is not tolerated.

- Although there are remaining differences between the attainment of disadvantaged pupils and other pupils nationally, leaders and governors have taken action to address this. They have reorganised the way in which the additional funding is spent to ensure that all eligible pupils receive the help to which they are entitled. School information shows that disadvantaged pupils are catching up quickly.
- Pupils are very enthusiastic about the provision for sports. This is as a result of the use of the sports funding which has been used to increase the number of clubs and activities for pupils. Pupils now take part in inter-schools competition and have already experienced some success. Part of the funding has also been used to provide extra swimming lessons to help keep pupils safe from the dangers of nearby rivers and waterways.
- The school encompasses individuality and diversity and encourages pupils to share and celebrate their different faiths and beliefs. This provides an opportunity to promote British values, including tolerance, respect and the rule of law. This is reflected in the way in which pupils from a diverse range of backgrounds get on well together as they learn and play together. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted effectively.
- The majority of parents who responded to the online survey and who spoke to inspectors believe that the school is well led and managed and that the school listens to any concerns they may raise.

### **Governance of the school**

- Much of the governors' involvement in the school has been spent on the expansion programme that has demanded much of their time. Consequently, they have not all been rigorous in checking that the school is performing as well as it should in recent times. They provide good support to school leaders and have been instrumental in ensuring that the school ran smoothly during the building project. Governors know the school well but, like some school leaders, they have an overgenerous view of how well the school is doing. They have a wide range of professional skills and they take advantage of training opportunities available to increase their effectiveness. They provide challenge to school leaders, although there are times when they accept that what leaders tell them is accurate, without checking for themselves.
- Governors ensure that they meet all statutory responsibilities for checking that school policies are reviewed regularly and are up to date. They carefully monitor the school's budget, including the pupil premium funding, to make sure that the school provides value for money. They have supported school leaders to make the necessary changes to secure appropriate staff and to restructure the leadership team.

## Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Safeguarding pupils is given high priority and all staff fully understand their duty to keep pupils safe. There is a strong culture within school that all staff need to be vigilant in spotting the signs that a pupil may be in need of help. They know exactly what to do if they have a safeguarding concern about a pupil.
- School leaders work closely with external agencies to ensure that pupils who are at risk from harm receive the right support quickly. Through the curriculum, pupils are taught how to keep themselves safe from external dangers. Pupils are taught about the dangers of drugs and alcohol abuse and the importance of adopting a healthy lifestyle.
- Policies and procedures for safeguarding are all up to date and regularly reviewed. All adults who visit school are checked and procedures for vetting new staff are robust. The school site is safe and secure and very well maintained.

## Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

## Requires improvement

- The quality of teaching is not consistently good and so pupils do not make as much progress as they should. Teaching is better in key stage 2 than in key stage 1. Too often, teachers do not have high enough expectations for pupils and they do not challenge them to do better.
- Teachers do not use assessment information about pupils to plan work that is suitably matched to the needs of different groups of pupils. Often, pupils of different abilities are provided with the same work. As a result, pupils, especially those who are most able, do not progress as well as they should.
- Teachers provide regular written and oral feedback to pupils about their work. However, the quality of this feedback varies across the school. Teachers do not provide enough guidance to pupils to help them to improve their writing. Weaknesses in spelling, handwriting and punctuation are not always picked up and so pupils continue to make the same mistakes.
- The teaching of phonics is inconsistent across the school. Not all teachers and support staff have a good enough understanding of how to teach phonics systematically. This slows the pace of learning and progress that pupils make in reading and writing. There is little challenge in phonics for the most able pupils.
- There are good relationships between staff and pupils and this encourages pupils to listen in class and to behave well. Pupils respect their teachers and respond quickly to instructions. Teachers provide plenty of opportunities for pupils to talk about their work and to share their ideas. This helps pupils, particularly those who are less able, to learn.
- Teaching assistants provide effective support to pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. They probe gently by asking questions that help these pupils to understand what they are expected to do, so pupils experience success in small steps.
- Some teachers engage and motivate their pupils very well. They do this by providing imaginative activities that engage pupils and generate their interest. For example, in a

Year 4 English lesson, pupils acted in role play to interview each other to answer questions about two contrasting characters. This approach helped them to develop an understanding that people can have different points of view.

## Personal development, behaviour and welfare

**Good**

### Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good. This is a real strength of the school and is reflected in the comment made by one parent who told inspectors, 'I love the ethos of the school. It is nurturing, loving and caring.'
- The school is rightly proud of its reputation within the community as being an inclusive school. All pupils are warmly welcomed into school where they develop confidence that helps them to form positive relationships with each other and with adults. Pupils delighted in talking to inspectors about their school. They are articulate and show respect towards the views of others.
- The school is situated in delightful grounds, and the new buildings provide a calm and purposeful learning environment. The grounds provide for learning outside as well as providing a variety of structured activities for pupil at breaktimes. There is plenty of space for pupils to run around, and plenty of seating for those who like to sit quietly and chat to friends.
- Pupils feel safe in school. They say there is very little bullying but that adults are on hand to listen. Pupils agree that adults will listen to them and take their concerns seriously. Pupils know about different forms of bullying, including that related to modern technology. Visitors to school, such as police officers, support the school in teaching pupils to stay safe.
- Staff at all levels know pupils well and they take great care to ensure that pupils and their families are well supported during their time at school. The school has a number of pupils whose circumstances may make them more vulnerable. Leaders work closely with external agencies to provide the right support so that pupils feel confident in school and are ready to learn.
- Pupils come from a wide variety of social and cultural backgrounds and they enjoy playing and working together. Pupils are happy and they enjoy school. This is reflected in their improved rates of attendance. Attendance is now about average, and the number of pupils who are persistently absent is declining.
- Lunchtimes are very well managed and so pupils eat healthy lunches within a sociable environment. Pupils said they enjoy their meals and that there is always plenty to choose from.
- Not all pupils take pride in their work because not all teachers insist on high standards of presentation. In some lessons, there is no sense of urgency, so pupils take too much time to settle.

## Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Pupils behave well in class and when moving around the school. Staff have introduced new systems to manage pupils' behaviour and so pupils are clear about what is expected from them.
- Most pupils have a good understanding of right and wrong and they know that they have to take responsibility for their own actions. They also understand that their own actions may have an impact on others.
- During the inspection, pupils were polite and courteous to adults and to each other. They say there are very few incidents of racist behaviour and that name-calling or derogatory language is not tolerated. Pupils report that sanctions for such behaviour are effective because, 'you miss your breaks forever!'
- School records show a reduction in the number of reported incidents and exclusions are rare.
- Just occasionally, there is low-level disruption to lessons when pupils are bored and when they lose interest in what they are supposed to do. Some teaching assistants have to spend too much time managing pupils' behaviour rather than on supporting pupils' learning.
- Parents, governors and staff mostly agreed that pupils' behaviour is good and that they are happy and safe in school.

### Outcomes for pupils

### Requires improvement

- Pupils make inconsistent progress across the school. Often, gaps in their learning are not addressed until the final two years in school where teaching is stronger. Last year, the percentage of pupils who reached the expected standard at the end of key stage 2 was average in writing and mathematics but it was below average in reading.
- Progress is slower in key stage 1 than it is in key stage 2, particularly in writing. This is because pupils are not taught basic skills well enough. They struggle to write neatly and they have little understanding of spelling patterns or when and where to punctuate their work. This hampers their ability to write at length as they lack the stamina and ability to do so.
- In some classes, pupils struggle to use phonics skills to decode words and they tend to rely on adults to read the words for them. They often fail to understand the story because they do not use punctuation to read for meaning and understanding and this slows their progress. However, in other classes, pupils read fluently and with enjoyment. They say they read frequently both to find information and for pleasure.
- School leaders have taken direct action to improve pupils' progress in reading. They have introduced a 'reading challenge' to encourage pupils to read more books, both at home and school. Pupils have responded positively to this challenge and are proud of the increasing number of books they read.
- The most able pupils, including the most able disadvantaged pupils, do not make enough progress in mathematics. This is because there are too few opportunities for them to deepen their understanding. There are not enough times when they use their

mathematical skills to solve problems calling for reasoning and application.

- School leaders recognise the inconsistent progress made by pupils in mathematics. To this end, they have introduced a new programme that provides more opportunities for pupils to reason and solve written problems. This is beginning to show an improvement in pupils' outcomes. School performance information shows that pupils in some year groups have made good progress and are on course to reach the expected standard in 2017.
- Historically, disadvantaged pupils have not done as well as other pupils nationally. School information shows that a number of disadvantaged pupils have additional needs, including speech and language difficulties or English as an additional language. Leaders have reorganised the way in which the additional funding is spent, to provide additional classroom support. This is helping disadvantaged pupils to overcome their difficulties and learn as well as other pupils. The difference between the attainment of disadvantaged pupils and all pupils nationally is rapidly reducing as result of the support provided.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress. This is because they are provided with effective support in class. Teaching assistants break learning into small steps by explaining to pupils what they are expected to do. This increases the confidence of these pupils who are more likely to try to complete their work independently and so progress well.

## Early years provision

**Good**

- Children get off to a good start and are well prepared for the more demanding curriculum in Year 1. They are welcomed into a bright and stimulating environment where they feel safe and secure. Staff provide high-quality care and support so children develop the social and emotional skills that prepare them well for learning.
- Children get on very well together. They learn to share, to take turns and to listen to each other. They behave well because they are taught how to manage their feelings. Staff help them to form relationships and to develop a good understanding of the world around them.
- Staff have a good understanding of the different learning needs of children. They observe them carefully when they are playing and learning and use this information to plan new learning experiences. They carefully target those children who have special educational needs and/or disabilities to ensure they are provided with the help and support that helps them to overcome their difficulties. Consequently, these children achieve well.
- All adults in both the Nursery and Reception classes probe children's learning by asking questions and talking to them. This helps children, particularly those who speak English as an additional language, to make good progress. There are a number of children who have speech and language difficulties, some of whom are disadvantaged. Adults provide a rich literacy environment for these children to see and hear written and spoken models of language. This increases their confidence and helps them to learn.
- There is an appropriate balance of activities that are led by adults and those that children select for themselves. This helps children to develop learning behaviours,



including independence, resilience and stamina. They learn to 'have a go' and learn from their mistakes.

- Children in the early years make good progress across all areas of learning. They have been taught basis skills, including cutting and colouring. This helps them to complete their work neatly and accurately so they are proud of their achievements. They have learned how to form letters correctly and use their phonics knowledge to write simple sentences.
- Staff know their children well and so they are able to provide the right support. Consequently, children feel safe in school and they behave well. They are curious about the world around them and they enjoy investigating and exploring their environment. They are motivated and engage well with all adults who work across the early years. There are positive relationships with parents, who value the quality of education their children receive.
- Although the outdoor area is well equipped, it does not yet provide children with the opportunity to carry out activities other than those that develop their physical skills. The early years leader has plans in place to develop the outdoor area to allow children to access all areas of their curriculum both indoors and outside.
- The early years leader has a good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of provision. She has created a strong team of teachers and support staff who work closely together to provide high-quality learning experiences for children.

## School details

Unique reference number	109789
Local authority	Reading
Inspection number	10024592

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	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	342
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Marian Livingstone
Headteacher	Madeleine Cosgrove
Telephone number	01189 375530
Website	<a href="http://www.theridgewayprimary.net">www.theridgewayprimary.net</a>
Email address	<a href="mailto:head@theridgeway.reading.sch.uk">head@theridgeway.reading.sch.uk</a>
Date of previous inspection	24–25 January 2013

## Information about this school

- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- The school has undergone significant change since the previous inspection. In October 2013, the school embarked on a building project to increase the size of the school to create two extra classes in each year group. This project was completed in September 2016.
- The number of pupils has increased year on year. There are currently three classes in the Reception Year and Year 1. There are two classes in Years 2 and 3 and one class in each of Years 4, 5 and 6.
- The headteacher joined the school in September 2013 and there have been substantial changes to the leadership and the teaching team since then.

- There is provision for children in the early years in the Nursery and three Reception classes.
- About half of the pupils are of White British heritage and other pupils come from many other ethnic backgrounds. About a quarter of the pupils speak English as an additional language.
- The school does not meet the government's current floor standards. These set the minimum expectations for pupils' learning and progress.
- The proportion of pupils eligible for pupil premium funding is higher than usual.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is broadly average.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed pupils working in 16 lessons or parts of lessons and they looked at work in pupils' books. They observed pupils in class, in the playground and as they moved around the school. The lead inspector listened to pupils reading in Year 2.
- Meetings were held with school leaders, teachers and pupils. Inspectors met with four governors and an adviser from the local authority.
- Among the documents scrutinised were school improvement plans, records relating to pupils' behaviour and attendance and minutes from governors' meetings. Inspectors also looked at how the school records and tracks pupils' progress and information showing how the school keeps pupils safe in school.
- The views of parents were taken into account by analysing the 20 responses to the online survey, Parent View. Inspectors also spoke informally to parents during the inspection.

## Inspection team

Joy Considine, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Peter Dunmall	Ofsted Inspector
Sara Benn	Ofsted Inspector
Lynn Martin	Ofsted Inspector

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