

Inspection of John Rankin Junior School

Henshaw Crescent, Newbury, Berkshire RG14 6ES

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| Inspection dates: | 22 October and 7 November 2024 |
| The quality of education | Inadequate |
| Behaviour and attitudes | Good |
| Personal development | Good |
| Leadership and management | Inadequate |
| Previous inspection grade | Good |

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils at this school do not receive an acceptable standard of education. The school does not have high enough expectations of pupils' academic success. In many subjects, pupils do not achieve well. This means that they are not prepared for their next steps. The school has not considered what pupils must learn and remember sufficiently well. Weaknesses in the delivery of the curriculum mean that pupils do not build on their learning over time.

Pupils are happy at school. They feel well cared for by trusted adults. Pupils enjoy breacktimes and lunchtimes, where they access a wide range of activities to enjoy with their friends. Pupils show kindness and empathy towards each other. The school's recent improvements to pupils' behaviour mean that most behave well. Typically, pupils are attentive and enthusiastic learners.

Pupils benefit from the opportunities to engage in community events and to interact with visitors to the school. For example, pupils enjoy opportunities to cook with local chefs and to meet role models from the world of sport. Pupils are proud of their links with a local residential home and know that their visits with cards and gifts bring pleasure to those that they meet.

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

Over time, the school has not taken the necessary actions to improve pupils' learning. High staff turnover, including to many leadership roles, has slowed the pace of change. The governing body has not maintained a robust oversight of the quality of education that pupils receive. It has not provided suitable challenge and support to help the school bring about necessary improvement.

In contrast, the school has successfully brought about positive changes to pupils' behaviour and the provision to foster pupils' personal development. These improvements mean that the school has established the foundations for pupils' learning. These changes, along with greater stability in staffing and leadership, also signal the school's capacity to tackle the weaknesses in pupils' education.

The curriculum is weak. It lacks breadth and balance because subjects such as music, computing and modern foreign languages are rarely taught. There are many subjects where the curriculum content is not clear. This makes it difficult for teachers to design learning that enables pupils to accumulate key knowledge and skills. Pupils' learning is hampered by poor activity choices. Often, they experience disconnected lessons and complete isolated activities that do not contribute to their learning. As a result, pupils have gaps in their knowledge and their achievement is poor.

The school recognises the shortcomings in the curriculum and has begun to remedy the situation. This means that, in a few subjects, there is a more cohesive and ambitious curriculum in place. In mathematics, for example, pupils have better access to resources that aid their learning. In these subjects, pupils' understanding of key concepts is

stronger. Even so, many pupils have gaps in their learning which are not identified and addressed. This prevents them from learning as well as they should.

Pupils benefit from the school's focus on teaching reading. In reading lessons, pupils encounter interesting and engaging books which they analyse and explore. This fosters a love of reading. The school has recently prioritised staff training on phonics to help those pupils who are in the early stages of learning to read. As a result, pupils who need extra help with their reading are supported well to read with increasing fluency.

There are effective processes in place to accurately identify pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). These pupils are well cared for in terms of their social and emotional needs. However, pupils with SEND do not achieve well. This is because of the wider deficiencies in the curriculum.

The school's focus on improving pupils' behaviour has had a positive impact. Pupils behave well most of the time. They understand the expectations to be 'composed, considerate and compassionate'. They demonstrate this in their interactions where they are unfailingly polite and well mannered.

The school gives careful consideration to pupils' personal development. Pupils have opportunities to assume responsibilities through leadership roles on the school council, the eco-team and as playground leaders or house captains. They take pride in helping others. Pupils learn about diversity and difference within their community and in different countries around the world. They are prepared well for life in modern Britain.

Most staff are supportive of the school's work to promote their professional development and safeguard their well-being. However, there are limited opportunities for stakeholders to give their views. For example, many parents and carers expressed concerns about the school, particularly about the quality of education that their children receive.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Governors have not provided effective oversight or challenge to mitigate the impact of staff turbulence on pupils' quality of education. This means that pupils are not achieving as well as they should. Governors must make sure that they have the knowledge and information that they need to hold the school to account for pupils' education, so that they are well prepared for their next steps.
- The school's actions to improve the curriculum have not made enough of a difference to pupils' academic success. Some subjects are not taught, while in many subjects, the curriculum is not well designed or ordered. This means that teachers are unsure what

to teach, which leads to them delivering disconnected lessons. Pupils, including those with SEND, do not learn all that they should. The school should ensure that there is a clearly defined, broad and ambitious curriculum that teachers are equipped to teach so that pupils build their knowledge in all subjects over time.

- Many pupils have gaps in their learning, which are not identified or rectified. This makes it difficult for pupils to recall prior learning or to build on what they know when new subject content is introduced. The school should develop teachers' expertise in spotting gaps in knowledge and then making appropriate adaptations so that pupils move on with their learning.
- Governors do not engage sufficiently well with stakeholders. This means that the views of parents are not considered in the school's self-evaluation. Governors should ensure that they have processes, including the use of information gathered by school leaders, to capture all stakeholders' views so that they can evaluate and respond to suggestions and concerns.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use information from Ofsted Parent View when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

In the report, '[disadvantaged pupils](#)' is used to mean pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND); pupils who meet the [definition of children in need of help and protection](#); pupils receiving statutory local authority support from a social worker; and pupils who otherwise meet the criteria used for deciding the school's [pupil premium funding](#) (this includes pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years, looked after children (children in local authority care) and/or children who left care through adoption or another formal route).

School details

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| Unique reference number | 109825 |
| Local authority | West Berkshire |
| Inspection number | 10341239 |
| Type of school | Junior |
| School category | Community |
| Age range of pupils | 7 to 11 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number of pupils on the school roll | 348 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair of governing body | David Marsh |
| Headteacher | Flora Cooper |
| Website | www.johnrankinschools.com |
| Date of previous inspection | 15 May 2019, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 |

Information about this school

- The school is federated with John Rankin Infant and Nursery School. Both schools have the same headteacher
- The school does not currently use any registered alternative providers.
- There has been considerable turnover in staff since the previous inspection. The headteacher took up post in September 2022. There have also been changes to the school's senior leadership team. In addition, new middle leaders have recently taken on new roles.
- There have been many changes to the governing body in recent times. Following seven years as a member of the governing body, the chair of governors took up post in January 2023.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005. During a graded inspection, we grade the school for each of our key judgements (quality of education; behaviour and attitudes; personal development; and leadership and

management) and for any relevant provision judgement (early years and/or sixth form provision). Schools receiving a graded inspection from September 2024 will not be given an overall effectiveness grade.

In accordance with section 44(2) of the Education Act 2005, His 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.

- Inspections are a point-in-time evaluation about the quality of a school's education provision.
- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- The inspection started on 22 October 2024. It was paused on 23 October 2024 in line with [Ofsted inspections and visits: Deferring, pausing and gathering additional evidence](#) policy. The same inspection team returned on 7 November 2024 to complete the inspection.
- The inspection team met with school leaders as well as representatives from the governing body and the local authority.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics, art and design, history and physical education. For each deep dive, inspectors held discussions about the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. Inspectors also discussed the curriculum for all subjects and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspectors: reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.
- The inspectors analysed responses to Ofsted's online staff survey and spoke to staff about their views of the school. There were no responses to the Ofsted's online pupil survey.
- The inspectors took account of the responses to Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text responses. An inspector also spoke with parents on the morning of the first day of the inspection.

Inspection team

Kate Fripp, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Laura James

His Majesty's Inspector

Bill James

Ofsted Inspector

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