

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 1231
www.gov.uk/ofsted



13 November 2025

Flora Cooper
Executive headteacher
John Rankin Junior School
Henshaw Crescent
Newbury
Berkshire
RG14 6ES

Dear Ms Cooper

Serious weaknesses monitoring inspection of John Rankin Junior School

This letter sets out the findings from the monitoring inspection that took place on 1 October 2025 on behalf of His Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills. The monitoring inspection was carried out under section 8(2) of the Education Act 2005 and was the first monitoring inspection since the school was judged to have serious weaknesses following the graded (section 5) inspection that took place in October 2024.

The purpose of a monitoring inspection is not to grade the school's key and (where applicable) provision judgements, but to identify and report on the school's progress. It is to highlight to the school and parents any improvements that school leaders have made since the school's previous graded inspection.

During the inspection, we discussed with you, your senior leaders, a representative of the local authority, the chief executive officer of Maiden Erlegh Trust, the co-chairs of the governing body and other senior leaders, the actions that have been taken to improve the school since the most recent graded inspection. We discussed the ongoing impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. We also visited lessons, looked at pupils' work, held meetings with pupils and other staff and scrutinised records of governors' meetings. We have considered all this in coming to our judgement.

Leaders have made progress to improve the school, but more work is necessary for the school to no longer be judged as having serious weaknesses.

The progress made towards the removal of the serious weaknesses designation

Since the previous inspection, there have been changes to the school's leadership team and governing body, including the appointment of two governing body co-chairs. The school has worked in collaboration with the local authority to support important developments. It has received ongoing external support from a multi-academy trust. The academic year has started well. You have a full complement of staff and the school has a settled and purposeful atmosphere.

On this first monitoring visit, we focused on checking the impact of leaders' actions to improve the curriculum, governance and leadership.

At the time of the last inspection, inspectors identified narrowing of the curriculum with subjects, such as music, computing and modern foreign languages, not taught regularly enough. You and your leadership team have now addressed this omission. All subjects are planned and taught. Pupils learn a curriculum of suitable breadth and depth. The content of the curriculum is now sequenced appropriately in all subjects. However, some of the curriculum developments are relatively new and in the early stages of implementation. This means that there are inconsistencies in delivery of the curriculum, which affect pupils' learning between and within subjects. For example, pupils' learning is less secure in some subjects where improvements are newer and the curriculum is not fully embedded. Variations in learning mean that pupils do not achieve as well, including disadvantaged pupils and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). However, there are encouraging signs of improvement and the standard of pupils' work is beginning to improve across the school.

Successful work to improve assessment procedures means that the school is able to check pupils' learning more effectively than at the time of the previous inspection. Greater clarity about pupils' achievement is helping staff to identify and address gaps in pupils' learning with increasing success. However, there are still notable gaps in pupils' learning, which continue to hamper their achievement. For instance, weaknesses in the teaching of multiplication tables mean that pupils lack some of the fundamental mathematical knowledge required to achieve well in this subject. More time is needed to ensure that gaps in pupils' learning are addressed fully. You rightly recognise that there is still more to do to improve the curriculum and to ensure that pupils achieve consistently well. The school is now focused on embedding improvements made since the previous inspection. This involves ensuring that the curriculum is implemented effectively to rectify gaps in pupils' knowledge.

Reading continues to be a relative strength in the curriculum. The school uses a phonics programme, which is consistent with the approach used in the federated infant school. It has also introduced a new programme to support the development of reading skills more generally. The school provides effective support to pupils in the early stages of learning to read to help them to read successfully.

Governance has improved since the previous inspection. Governors have introduced rigorous monitoring procedures, which are closely aligned with the school's improvement

priorities. This enables governors to provide robust levels of challenge and to hold the school to account effectively. Governors are well placed to support the school's drive for improvement.

You and the governing body rightly recognise that more work is needed to engage stakeholders. The school has introduced a range of activities to facilitate parental engagement since the previous inspection. However, parents' views of the school, while more positive than at the time of the last inspection, continue to be mixed.

The school's improvement plans are fit for purpose and focus on the areas identified at the previous inspection as in need of significant improvement. Strengthened teamwork and a shared commitment to securing the necessary developments are helping to ensure that improvements are sustainable. Staff know the priorities for improvement and recognise progress made since the previous inspection. For instance, they speak positively about the difference developments in the curriculum have made to their teaching and to their workload.

You and your leadership team have been outward looking and collaborative in your approach to school improvement. The school has engaged well with external support. For instance, the school has worked effectively with advisers from the local authority to secure important improvements in the quality of education. You and your team are also working with external support provided by a multi-academy trust. External support provided includes guidance on aspects of the school's work, including leadership, school improvement and identification of, and support for, pupils with SEND. You report the positive impact this work has had on enabling the school to focus on priorities for development and to secure the necessary improvements.

I am copying this letter to the co-chairs of the board of governors and the Department for Education's regional director and the director of children's services for West Berkshire. This letter will be published on the Ofsted reports website.

Yours sincerely

Julie Sackett and Scott Reece
His Majesty's Inspectors