

The Ridge Junior School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	109026
Local Authority	South Gloucestershire
Inspection number	288257
Inspection dates	10–11 July 2007
Reporting inspector	David Westall

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Junior
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	7–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	235
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Anita Sinha-Royle
Headteacher	David Beeley
Date of previous school inspection	10 February 2003
School address	Melrose Avenue Yate Bristol BS37 7AP
Telephone number	01454 867125
Fax number	01454 867126

Age group	7–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

The school serves an area where the social and economic circumstances of most parents are broadly average. Nearly all pupils are White British, and the percentage identified as having learning difficulties is similar to most schools.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a good school where pupils achieve well and their personal development is a key strength. Staff appreciate and value the pupils, and help them to develop into kind, caring and cooperative individuals. Consequently, the school is a happy and harmonious community where pupils enjoy their education and get on well together. The school's success is quickly sensed by visitors, who are met by enthusiastic pupils, interesting displays of pupils' work and by committed staff who clearly love their jobs. In these circumstances, it is not surprising that pupils do well and that parents generally hold the school in high regard.

Overall standards are above average in Year 6 and reflect pupils' good achievement from their broadly average starting points on entry to the school. Pupils do well in English, science and information and communication technology (ICT). In mathematics, pupils' progress is slower, though satisfactory, and standards are average. The main area in which improvement is needed to raise standards in mathematics is in pupils' skills in solving problems. There is no hint of complacency in this school and it is now striving hard to improve provision in mathematics so that pupils make the same good progress as in other key subjects.

The quality of teaching and learning is good, and pupils benefit from a good curriculum that provides them with a rich range of worthwhile learning opportunities. Teachers' enthusiasm and professionalism shine through in lessons. They usually match tasks accurately to pupils' needs and have the knack of making learning interesting. Occasionally, however, there are aspects of the teaching of mathematics which require improvement. Pupils' personal development and well-being are good, and stem from the supporting relationships that exist across the school. Pupils have positive attitudes and their behaviour is good. They are polite, readily listen to others and accept differences of opinion. The quality of care, guidance and support is also good. However, while pupils are given targets for improvement in English and mathematics, they are not always sufficiently aware of these, and this limits their skills in evaluating their own progress. In addition, teachers' marking is variable and does not always provide pupils with the guidance they need to achieve well in mathematics.

Good leadership and management are at the heart of the school's success. When the headteacher took up his post in late 2001, the school was at a low ebb and pupils' standards were below average. The significant improvements in the school's performance owe much to his astute and committed leadership, and parents understandably hold him in high regard. They comment, for example, that the headteacher has 'made a big difference and has everyone's respect'. Self-evaluation procedures are rigorous and mean the school has an accurate view of its strengths and areas for development. Responsibility is delegated wisely, and the senior leadership team and governors fulfil their roles well. Subject leaders also make valuable contributions to pupils' achievement. However, the monitoring and evaluation of mathematics is not always precisely enough focused on how teaching in this subject impacts on pupils' learning. The school has made good progress since its last inspection and the determination and high expectations of staff mean it is well placed to get even better.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise pupils' standards in mathematics and, in particular, improve their skills in solving mathematical problems.
- Ensure that the monitoring and evaluation of the teaching of mathematics is always precisely focused on how well teaching contributes to pupils' learning.

- Improve pupils' awareness of their learning targets and make sure that marking always provides pupils with clear guidance about how to improve their performance.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Standards are above average overall and pupils' achievement is good. Standards in English are above average in Year 6, reflecting the school's results in 2006. Pupils achieve well in the subject as a result of good teaching and the many opportunities they have to use and refine their language skills in work across the curriculum. For example, the impressive monthly school newsletters demonstrate the considerable skills of pupils in Years 5 and 6 in editing and presenting information in interesting ways. Pupils' results in science were above average in 2006. Current standards show that pupils' performance in this subject is increasing further because the school has improved pupils' scientific enquiry skills. Standards have also risen in ICT this year, and pupils' progress is good because they now have ready access to laptops to support their work in classrooms. In mathematics, standards now are a little higher than in 2006 but remain average. Weaknesses in pupils' mathematical problem-solving skills contribute to pupils' satisfactory, rather than better, achievement in this subject.

In physical education and sport, pupils achieve well and standards are high. In gymnastics, in particular, pupils excel and have won the under-11 National Gymnastics Championships for the last ten years. Across the school, pupils with learning difficulties achieve well. The progress of the most capable pupils is generally good but is only satisfactory in mathematics.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils are keen to learn and the attendance rate is above average. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good, although the school is sensibly taking action to increase pupils' multicultural awareness. A small minority of boys occasionally fail to match the exemplary behaviour that is usual at the school. Pupils respond well when given responsibility, for example, as members of the active school council or as mentors during breaktimes.

Pupils are safety conscious and are concerned for the welfare of others. They have an exceptionally good understanding of the importance of healthy eating and some grow their own organic vegetables at school. Pupils love sport and keeping fit. They have a strong social and community awareness, and are keen fundraisers for a wide range of charities. Pupils' ability to work together constructively, and their good progress in academic learning, result in them being well prepared for their future.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teachers know what they expect pupils to learn and their explanations are clear so that pupils are confident about tackling their work. Their planning is generally good, reflecting their accurate assessments of pupils' next steps in learning. Teaching assistants are well briefed and provide good support, particularly for pupils with learning difficulties. These pupils also benefit from expert teaching from the special educational needs coordinator. Teachers capture pupils' interests well, and this is reflected in pupils' enthusiasm for learning and their good behaviour.

Often, teachers know when to intervene with well-judged questions and when to stand back and let pupils work things out for themselves. Nevertheless, there are some areas for improvement, particularly in mathematics. Occasionally, the pace of learning is not sufficiently brisk and opportunities are missed to check pupils' understanding through probing questions. In addition, the most capable pupils sometimes mark time in Year 3 because their work is too easy.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

Pupils benefit from many opportunities to develop their understanding and skills in English, science and ICT and this is reflected in their good achievement in these subjects. In mathematics, provision is satisfactory but the school recognises the need to give more emphasis to problem solving to help to raise standards further. The curriculum is effective in fostering pupils' personal development. Provision for physical education and sport is first-rate, and results in pupils doing well in this area and their keen awareness of the importance of exercise.

The curriculum is enriched by a wide range of educational visits, visitors and clubs. Many of these opportunities help to give real meaning to the topics studied. After reflecting on a visit to a museum as part of their work on World War II, for example, a pupil remarked, 'We began to really understand how it must have felt to be evacuated and to leave your family'.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Pupils feel safe and know that the staff will listen if they have any problems. Child protection procedures are robust and regular health and safety checks are carried out. Parents are justifiably confident that their children are well looked after at school. One parent commented, 'The staff are very caring and do all they can to make sure your child is happy,' reflecting the views of many. Strong links are established with external agencies to provide support for individual pupils, for example, those with learning difficulties, when this is required.

Pupils benefit from good support and guidance for their personal development. Academic guidance is not always as effective as the personal guidance. Pupils' knowledge of their targets in English and mathematics is inconsistent and teachers' marking does not always help pupils to understand exactly what they need to do to improve in mathematics.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher checks the school's performance rigorously. He is quick to recognise and praise the good work of staff and pupils, and alert to situations where people need wise advice and guidance. Because teachers benefit from helpful feedback, including from the senior leadership team, a climate has been created where everyone is trying to improve the school further. Staff morale is high. Strategic planning is well focused and effective. It has guided significant improvements in pupils' standards since the last inspection, and recent initiatives have enhanced pupils' scientific investigation skills and their standards in ICT.

The school recognises that there is now a need to focus more strongly on mathematics and this is sensibly reflected in the new school development plan. A good range of methods is used

conscientiously by the subject coordinator to check provision in mathematics. However, these are not always focused sharply enough on how teaching impacts on learning. As a result, they are not rapidly bringing about improvement in pupils' problem-solving skills and accelerating the progress of specific pupils who may be falling behind. The governors are committed and effective. They have developed an accurate view of the school's performance, including through regular visits to see it in operation.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	School Overall
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	2
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The behaviour of learners	2
The attendance of learners	2
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average to below average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Annex A

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

12 July 2007

Dear Children

Inspection of The Ridge Junior School, Melrose Avenue, Yate, Bristol BS37 7AP

Thank you for welcoming us into your school and for being so friendly, polite and helpful. Here are some of the good things we found out.

- You think The Ridge Junior School is a good school and we agree with you.
- You enjoy school, like your teachers and have lots of friends.
- Your behaviour is good.
- The grown-ups take good care of you, and you know who to go to if you need some help.
- You have an excellent understanding of the importance of healthy eating and exercise, and know how to keep safe.
- You are doing well with your school work because the teaching is good.
- Your school is well organised and you have many opportunities to learn different things.

We found just a few things that the school needs to improve. We have asked the school to make sure that you do even better in mathematics, especially at solving problems. Linked to this, we have asked the adults to make sure that they check even more carefully how well they are helping you to learn in mathematics. We also want teachers to help you to understand your targets in English and mathematics and make sure that their marking always gives you good help. This will help you begin to decide for yourselves how well you are learning and make sure that you know how to improve your work.

Thank you again for your help. We really enjoyed our time at your lovely school.

Yours sincerely

David Westall Lead inspector