

Ramsey Manor Lower School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	109587
Local Authority	BEDFORDSHIRE
Inspection number	288437
Inspection dates	26–27 March 2007
Reporting inspector	Keith Sadler

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

Type of school	First
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–9
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	283
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Jonathan Horsler
Headteacher	Miss Heather Golding
Date of previous school inspection	13 January 2003
School address	Manor Road Barton-le-clay Bedford Bedfordshire MK45 4NS
Telephone number	01582 881318
Fax number	01582 883921

Age group	4–9
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Ramsey Manor is a village lower school that is of above average size and provides for pupils from the age of four to nine. The school serves the village though some pupils attend from surrounding areas. In addition, the school has a specialist provision for six pupils with a primary diagnosis of autism. This facility serves the whole of Bedfordshire, with many of these pupils travelling some distance to the school. Almost all pupils are from White British backgrounds. Pupils are from a mix of economic backgrounds which are mostly advantaged. The number with learning difficulties and disabilities is above the national average.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Ramsey Manor is a satisfactory school, on an upward trend, and provides satisfactory value for money. Pupils' attainment and their achievement are satisfactory overall. Since the last inspection, the school's provision and standards have dipped, though there have been a number of improvements since the new headteacher took up her post. She has made a very good start to her headship. She has grasped what is needed to be improved and is determined to ensure that standards and pupils' achievement should improve from the current satisfactory levels. She has instigated rigorous improvement projects in English and mathematics which have had a positive impact, and standards in reading and writing have improved. Pupils' achievement in reading and writing is now good in all year groups and both Year 2 and Year 4 pupils are on course to attain above the expected levels. Furthermore, there are indications that progress in mathematics is improving. This is because the quality of teaching and learning in these areas has improved. There is very close checking of pupils' progress which enables teachers to be clear about the next steps to be taught. In science, and information and communication technology (ICT), pupils' achievement is satisfactory. However, the school does not keep a check on pupils' progress in either of these subjects.

Parents are overwhelmingly supportive of the school. As one parent said, 'It's like a home from home environment because all the staff are so friendly and caring.' The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory and has good features. Teachers invariably manage pupils well, relationships are good and they make good use of the new interactive whiteboards, which helps to engage pupils' interest and motivate them. However, in some lessons, pupils are not provided with sufficient challenge because teachers' expectations are sometimes too low. In addition, teachers sometimes provide too much time and this slows progress and is a key reason why achievement is satisfactory overall.

Children thrive in the Foundation Stage. From below average attainment on entry, due to the good provision they settle quickly and well and make good progress. By the time they leave the Reception unit, a large majority attain the expected goals in all learning areas. Pupils continue to make good progress in their personal development throughout the school and they achieve well in these areas. Behaviour is good, pupils have positive attitudes to school and relationships are good.

Leadership and management are satisfactory. There are appropriate arrangements in place to check the quality of the school's provision and senior leaders have a good understanding of what needs to be done. However, although in some areas, such as the Foundation Stage and English, subject leaders have a clear view of provision and standards, in other areas their role is less well developed. Governors provide suitable support though they are not sufficiently involved in the day-to-day life of the school to gain a clear enough picture of either provision or standards. As a result, they are not able to support the school's strategic direction.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the quality of teaching and learning by raising expectations of what pupils can achieve and quickening the pace of learning.
- Raise standards in science and ICT by developing the systems for tracking pupils' progress to include these subjects.
- Strengthen the role of subject leaders to enable them to develop a clear understanding of provision and standards in their areas.

- Improve the role of governors in the strategic management of the school.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Due to the good provision, children in the Foundation Stage achieve well, with the large majority attaining the expected goals on entry to Year 1 and a small minority exceeding them. For the past three years in tests for seven year olds, pupils have attained average standards in reading, writing and mathematics and their achievement has been satisfactory. However, there are indications that progress is quickening, and pupils at the end of Year 2 and 4 are on course to attain above average standards in writing and reading. In mathematics and science at both Year 2 and 4, pupils' achievement is satisfactory and their attainment is average. Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities, including those with autism, make satisfactory progress towards their targets.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' personal development is good. They behave well in lessons, assemblies and in the playground. Their attitudes to learning are positive. Pupils enjoy coming to school and feel safe there. They know there is someone they can turn to if they are in difficulty. Attendance is average, but the school does discourage holidays taken during the term. Pupils understand well the need to stay healthy through their eating and regular physical activity. They have good opportunities to take responsibility in the school, for instance as playground buddies. The school council is well established, with its own chair, secretary and treasurer, and has brought about improvements, for instance buying a 'friendship bench'. Pupils have contributed to the local community by working with parish councillors in planning a play area in the village.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Pupils learn about 'values' in assemblies and personal, social, health and citizenship lessons. They work well together in lessons. Pupils have a satisfactory understanding of the diversity of cultures within their own society. They are appropriately well prepared to move on to middle school.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. It is good in the Foundation Stage, where there is a good balance between activities led by the teacher and those initiated by children. Here, lessons are conducted at a good pace. There are good relationships between teachers and pupils and behaviour is managed well. Teachers use the new interactive whiteboards well to hold pupils' interest, for instance with the use of video clips. Often, they use questions well and their marking of work shows pupils clearly how they can improve. In addition, good support is provided in class by teachers and classroom assistants, particularly for pupils who find learning hard. However, in some lessons pupils' progress in learning is hampered because lesson time is not always used well and the pace of learning dips. In addition, work is not always matched closely to pupils' ability and there is not sufficient challenge, particularly for higher attaining pupils. This too, limits pupils' achievement.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum is satisfactory and enables learners to make satisfactory progress. Since the last inspection, the school has improved its provision for pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities, but this has yet to have an impact on these pupils' achievement. The curriculum in the Foundation Stage is good, enabling children to make good progress in the Reception classes. The school provides full coverage of all National Curriculum subjects in Years 1 to 4. Teachers are beginning to make links between different subjects and to incorporate ICT into their lessons, but this is not yet consistent across the school. There is a good programme of personal, social, health and citizenship education which contributes well to pupils' personal development. Additional activities are good. The curriculum is enriched well by a good range of clubs at lunchtime and after school, opportunities to learn musical instruments, and visits to local places of interest and places of worship of different faiths.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Pupils' care, guidance and support are good. The school takes good care of all its pupils with clear health, safety and welfare procedures. Child protection arrangements are good and widely understood. Risk assessments are effective and conscientiously observed. There is a good emphasis on making sure that pupils are safe and secure. All staff are committed to ensuring that all pupils are included in the life of the school and show sensitivity to the needs of each individual pupil, including those with autism, who are well integrated into the main school classes. Assessment of pupils' performance is good in English and mathematics though the tracking of pupils' progress in science and ICT is limited. Pupils are now set challenging targets in English and mathematics. They receive good guidance about personal issues and about how to improve their work. Teachers' marking is thorough and encouraging and shows pupils how to reach the next steps in their learning.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Although the overall quality of leadership and management is satisfactory, there are some good features. For example, the headteacher and deputy head work closely together as a team and have focused well on quickening pupils' progress and raising standards. This has arisen out of their good analysis of the school's provision and standards and has enabled the good quality improvement plan to be developed. There has been very positive impact in the areas in which they have focused - particularly in reading and writing. There is good capacity for further improvement. There is a very strong sense of teamwork amongst the staff and all are committed to the further improvement of the school. Some areas, such as English and the Foundation Stage, are led and managed particularly well and this has had a positive impact, though opportunities for other subject leaders to check the quality of provision and pupils' attainment in their subjects has been limited. Governance is satisfactory. The chair of governors provides good leadership, though overall, governors are not sufficiently well involved in the school. This limits the opportunity for them to lead well because their knowledge and understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses are not well developed.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	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?	3
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
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?	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	3

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	3
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
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	3

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	3
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3
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?	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	3
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3
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

28 March 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Ramsey Manor Lower School, Manor Road, Barton-le-Clay, Bedfordshire MK45 4NS

I am writing to let you know how much we enjoyed our visit to your school. Thank you very much for making us so welcome. We were impressed with your friendliness and good behaviour and your very sensible and helpful attitudes towards each other.

Here are some of the good things we found about your school.

- Your behaviour is good, you enjoy school and play together well.
- All the adults work hard to make sure that you are safe and cared for.
- Your headteacher is doing a good job.

We have asked the school to work on four things in particular to make your school even better.

- Make your lessons better by teachers giving you harder work to do and expecting you to work more quickly.
- Raise standards in science and ICT by teachers checking and noting down your progress.
- Make sure that teachers who are responsible for subjects check other teachers' lessons and how well you are doing in those subjects.
- Governors should visit more often so that they can help the school to be managed well.

You can all help by continuing to work hard and keeping your targets constantly in mind so that you can achieve them as quickly as possible.

With best wishes

Keith Sadler

Lead Inspector