

Ramsey Junior School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	110686
Local Authority	CAMBRIDGESHIRE
Inspection number	295372
Inspection dates	11–12 June 2007
Reporting inspector	Cheryl Thompson

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	277
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Candy Dodsley
Headteacher	Mrs Deborah Hannaford
Date of previous school inspection	20 March 2006
School address	Station Road Ramsey Huntingdon Cambridgeshire PE26 1JA
Telephone number	01487 812500
Fax number	01487 710821

Age group	7–11
Inspection dates	11–12 June 2007
Inspection number	295372

© Crown copyright 2007

Website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This is a larger than average junior school which serves mainly its local community. Most pupils transfer from the nearby infant school and skill levels on entry are above average. Pupils come from a wide range of backgrounds which includes small numbers of pupils from minority ethnic groups and those who speak English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is lower than average. There is an above average proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

The school is correct in its judgement that it is an improving school which provides a satisfactory education for its pupils. When the school was last inspected in March 2006, a number of weaknesses were found in relation to pupils' standards and achievement, teaching and how governors fulfilled their role. As a result, the school was issued with a Notice to Improve. Good improvement has come about through the hard work of the headteacher and staff and through good support from the local authority. Although leadership and management is now satisfactory overall, there are good systems in place for checking on the work of the school. The headteacher and senior team are setting a clear direction and have a secure understanding of the strengths and areas to improve within the school. Indeed, the main areas noted for improvement by this inspection are already included in the school's development plan for the next academic year. The capacity for further improvement is good and the school provides satisfactory value for money. In accordance with section 13 (5) of the Education Act 2005, HMCI is of the opinion that the school no longer requires significant improvement.

In English, mathematics, science and information communication technology (ICT), pupils' progress is satisfactory overall and good for Year 6. Through good strategic management of teaching staff, the headteacher has ensured Year 6 have caught up on lost learning and made good progress this year. The challenging targets set for their end of year attainment have been met, with a good number of more able pupils exceeding these. Standards are now above average. Underachievement has been halted, especially for more able pupils.

Pupils' personal development and well-being are satisfactory. Their above average standards and adequate social skills prepare them satisfactorily for their future. Pupils have a good understanding of healthy eating and how to keep physically fit. Attendance is satisfactory and pupils enjoy being at school, especially taking part in the outstanding range of clubs and sporting activities. In contrast, their enjoyment is often muted in lessons because, though teaching and the curriculum are satisfactory, teachers are not yet making enough links between subjects to make learning relevant and more interesting. When visitors contribute to lessons and exciting themes are organised pupils show great enthusiasm for learning and are receptive to new ideas. For example the recent 'Keeping Safe' week clearly fired their enthusiasm and helped them understand issues related to safety.

Behaviour is satisfactory. However, a significant minority of parents feel that behaviour is not good enough in school. Inspection findings agree that a small number of pupils do not always abide by school rules and are not considerate to others. As a result, some younger pupils do not always feel comfortable in the playgrounds. The headteacher and governors take a firm stand on poor behaviour and have recently made a good start in helping pupils learn to manage their own behaviour better and understand how their actions affect others. Overall, the school provides satisfactory care and support for pupils. Procedures for child protection and safeguarding pupils comply with the latest government requirements. There are always sufficient adults supervising break-times but regular checks are not made to ensure supervisors are always in the right places to make sure all pupils abide by the rules. Academic guidance is good. The headteacher's good system for tracking pupils' progress and setting their next targets is used profitably. Pupils have a clear understanding of their targets for improvement and what they have got to do to achieve these.

What the school should do to improve further

- Enable pupils to make better progress and enjoy learning more by using links between subjects more effectively.
- Improve the behaviour of pupils by providing them with more guidance and opportunities to learn to manage their own behaviour and take responsibility for their actions.
- Provide effective supervision during break-times to ensure that all pupils, especially the youngest, feel safe and comfortable when playing together.

A small proportion of schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next Section 5 inspection.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Achievement is satisfactory overall. There has been good improvement since the last inspection, when standards were average and achievement was judged to be inadequate. The school's good system for tracking progress is used very effectively by the headteacher to check that pupils are making enough progress. If underachievement is identified prompt action is taken to reverse it. Nevertheless, there remains a legacy of some underachievement, especially for Year 4 pupils. Better teaching and more stable staffing, are having a positive impact on learning which is demonstrated in the good progress made by Year 6 pupils. Pupils for whom English is an additional language make satisfactory progress, as do those with learning difficulties. They receive proficient support from teaching assistants based on satisfactory individual learning plans.

Standards are above average. Based on secure assessment, standards are much improved this year in mathematics where the decision to group pupils according to their learning needs has had a good impact. The headteacher identified that not enough practical work was being undertaken in science and took action. As a result, standards in science have improved considerably since 2006 and are well above average. Standards in English are above average. The introduction of guided reading has had a noticeable impact as standards in reading are much improved across the school, but particularly in Year 6.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory. Their behaviour and attitudes to learning are also satisfactory. They have a good understanding of the right sorts of food to eat for a healthy diet and the great majority abide by the school's healthy snack rules. Pupils know that regular exercise keeps them fit. The school council contributes well to the life and work of the school and takes its responsibilities seriously. In the main, though, there are limited opportunities for pupils to take on responsibilities in relation to keeping the school an orderly and friendly community. For example, older pupils do not have opportunities to take some responsibility for looking after others and providing break-time activities for younger pupils.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching is now consistently satisfactory and underpinned with good assessment procedures. Through these assessments, teachers have a clear understanding of what their pupils need to learn next and plan accordingly to cater for pupils of differing ability. Consequently, pupils are learning at a satisfactory rate and underachievement is being reversed. All teachers demonstrate secure subject knowledge and are beginning to make links between subjects to make learning more interesting, but this is at an early stage. As a result, it is not always easy for pupils to see the relevance of what they are learning and they do not always show a great deal of enthusiasm. In the good lessons observed, teaching was lively, behaviour was managed well, relationships were constructive and expectations were high. In these lessons pupils were keen to learn and made good progress.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum is satisfactory and there are green shoots of further improvement. An outstanding range of clubs and sporting activities is enjoyed by a high number of pupils and contributes well to their social development. Pupils' knowledge of other cultures has improved since the last inspection. They have continued to show concern for those less fortunate than themselves through their support for local and national charities. Since the last inspection, there has been good improvement in the provision for art and design, music and French. Pupils are very proud of their art work and accomplishments in learning to play a musical instrument. Currently, there are few identified opportunities for using ICT within subjects and not enough relevant links are made between subjects. However, appropriate plans are already in place to rectify this position. The headteacher and senior leaders have identified how they are going to develop links between subjects and introduce more 'theme weeks' to raise pupils' involvement and enjoyment in learning.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Care, guidance and support are satisfactory overall. The improved transition arrangements help Year 3 pupils settle into school quickly and are appreciated by parents. Pupils with learning difficulties have their needs identified well and sound education plans are put in place to help them make adequate progress. The school records incidents of poor behaviour and takes a firm line. Pupils and their parents are told when behaviour is unacceptable. Until very recently, the school has not had systems in place to help these pupils learn to manage their own behaviour. As a result, incidents of poor behaviour have continued to occur. The school has started to address this issue and funding is in place to extend this aspect of its work. Pupils say that they now feel safe in school although younger pupils still find the behaviour of a few older pupils sometimes intimidating at break-times. However, they are confident that an adult will help them if they have any fears or concerns. Academic guidance is good. Pupils have a very clear understanding of the 'must', 'could' and 'should' target system and take pride in checking their own progress towards meeting their targets.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The headteacher has continued to provide the good, clear leadership identified at the last inspection. Against a background of a turnover of almost half the teaching staff as well as the lengthy absence of the deputy headteacher due to ill health, the headteacher and senior team have prioritised their efforts successfully to bring about changes for the better. The quality of teaching and assessment has improved, which has led to improved standards and achievement. The school has made good use of the support provided by the local authority to help teachers and governors develop their leadership skills. For example, the leadership programme has helped senior staff fulfil their roles better. Good processes are now in place to monitor the quality of education the school provides. These processes are used rigorously and regularly to secure steady improvement and to prioritise and plan for future improvement. The school has correctly identified that more needs to be done to monitor and promote pupils' personal development and well-being. It has allocated funding and staff to develop this important work at the start of the next academic year. Governors have developed their role and know much more about the essential work of the school and are beginning to challenge the school to do better. They ensure that statutory responsibilities such as performance management for teachers are met. They are developing their understanding of the pupils' progress monitoring and evaluation system so that they can hold the school more precisely to account for its performance.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaints about school inspection', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

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
--	-----------------------

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?	3
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?	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2
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?	3
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3
The behaviour of learners	3
The attendance of learners	3
How well learners enjoy their education	3
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	3
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	3
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?	3

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	2
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

13 June 2007

Dear Children

Inspection of Ramsey Junior School, Ramsey, Huntingdon, PE26 1JA

Thank you for welcoming us to your school and being so friendly and helpful. We enjoyed visiting your classrooms and talking to the school council and Years 3 and 4. It was good to see how successful you are in your Monday assembly. You have learned a lot about the right sort of foods to eat and that exercise is important. I am writing to tell you what we found out about your school.

- Your headteacher and senior teachers have worked hard to make sure your school has improved a great deal since the last inspection a year ago.
- You are making satisfactory progress as you move through the school but in Year 6 you have worked very hard and made good progress - well done!
- Your behaviour is satisfactory but some of the younger children sometimes feel a bit uncomfortable in the playgrounds when the older children are not sticking to the school rules. Some older children need to be more considerate to the younger children.

Mrs Hannaford is making sure you get a satisfactory education. I have asked her to do some things to make it even better by:

- asking teachers to make better links between subjects so that lessons are more interesting for you
- making sure that, at break-times, adults are in the right places to make sure everyone sticks to the school rules
- helping some of you to behave better and by giving you all more opportunities to take on responsibility, especially the older children
- keeping a good check on how well you are looked after and how well you are developing as responsible young people.

Thank you again for your help with the inspection.

All good wishes

Cheryl Thompson

Lead Inspector