

The Ridgeway Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	109789
Local Authority	Reading
Inspection number	310097
Inspection dates	29–30 April 2008
Reporting inspector	Ruth Westbrook

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	221
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Kerry Mabley
Headteacher	Mrs Joy Parkes
Date of previous school inspection	4 May 2004
School address	Willow Gardens Reading Berkshire RG2 7EL
Telephone number	0118 9015530
Fax number	0118 9015531

Age group	3–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This is an average sized primary school with a part-time nursery class. About one third of pupils come from minority ethnic groups. The number of pupils who speak English as an additional language is average and only a small number are at an early stage of learning English. The percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals is twice the national average. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is similar to that of most schools but this does vary from year-to-year, and some year groups have a proportion that is above average. The school met the Financial Management Standards in Schools in November 2007 and holds the Basic Skills Quality Mark.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

This is a satisfactory school. The headteacher has effectively shared her vision with staff and governors and established a safe, well-kept and caring environment where children have the opportunity to grow in confidence and become more independent. The clear emphasis on being part of a larger family helps pupils to thrive and as a result, their personal development and well-being are good. The extension of this to families that the school serves through family learning is a much appreciated and valuable aspect of the school's work.

Achievement is satisfactory. Standards are below average, but pupils make satisfactory progress from their below average starting points. In the Foundation Stage, children's achievement is satisfactory. Children make satisfactory progress from low starting points and reach standards that are below those expected by the start of Year 1 in most aspects of their learning. Their communication skills are somewhat lower and there are some missed opportunities in the Nursery to encourage children to develop their speaking. Since the last inspection, standards have improved steadily at Key Stage 2 and national tests results last year show that Year 6 pupils made satisfactory progress. Although pupils in Key Stage 1 make satisfactory progress this is inconsistent. Recognising this, the school has embarked on a programme to address some areas of underachievement. Evidence from the inspection indicates that it is effective and pupils' achievement is improving. Consequently, assessments show that an increasing proportion of pupils in Years 1 and 2 are making faster rates of progress in reading and writing. Teaching and learning are satisfactory and beginning to address some general weaknesses in literacy and numeracy. However, the ablest pupils do not always make as much progress as they could because expectations in lessons are not always as high as they could be and there are not enough opportunities planned to challenge and extend their learning.

Care, guidance and support are satisfactory overall, but procedures to ensure pupils are safe and protected are excellent. Systems to assess pupils and track their progress are in place but not fully developed. Teachers are beginning to use information from the tracking system to set targets for individual pupils more effectively. These targets are more challenging than previously and are set to move progress from satisfactory to good. However, there remain some inconsistencies. In some classes, learning targets are not being shared with the pupils and this slows their learning. In some classes, marking of work gives valuable feedback to pupils on what they need to do to improve, but the quality of this varies. Some teachers' marking does not use pupils' learning targets to help them improve their work.

Satisfactory leadership and management ensure that systems for checking the implementation of changes are in place and new strand managers are playing an active part in this process as their skills increase. Strand managers' use of assessment data and information about performance does not yet have a sharp enough focus when used to evaluate and plan the school's work.

Senior leaders recognised the need to improve the curriculum by planning opportunities to use basic skills across a wide range of subjects. Although still satisfactory, as planning strengthens, this innovative approach to the curriculum is beginning to have a positive impact on pupils' enjoyment of learning and is improving rates of progress in their work. The school establishes good partnerships with outside agencies, businesses, other schools and the local authority to enhance its curriculum and provide additional support for its pupils.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 3

Children's levels of skills and understanding when they start school are below those expected for their age. Many also start with very low levels in speaking and listening and entry assessments show low scores in the area of learning related to their knowledge and understanding of the world. Despite standards that are below expectations when children join Year 1, they have made satisfactory progress in the Foundation Stage. Children make good progress in personal, social and emotional development. By the end of the Foundation Stage, children are working well together in pairs and groups. They enjoy helping each other.

Well-established routines in the Nursery make sure that children make a sound start. Children come to school happily and leave their parents without anxiety. In the Nursery, children engage well with activities led by adults and enjoy listening to the animated telling of a story. However, there is too little questioning planned in the Nursery to encourage children to develop their speaking skills. Good teaching in Reception encourages children to develop skills across a range of activities. There is a good mix of adult support and challenge. The school has developed its outdoor area well and children enjoy using it to enhance play creatively.

There have been positive changes recently to assessment procedures. Practitioners are gaining information more regularly about the progress children make from entry to the school. As a result, they are more able to match the curriculum to the children's individual needs. The school has improved the links between the Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1 since the last inspection.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards by establishing greater coherence and consistency in the effectiveness of teachers' marking and target setting.
- Sharpen the focus of the school's evaluation and strategic planning by improving the analysis and use of assessment data.
- Ensure that teacher's expectations challenge fully pupils of higher ability.
- Provide more opportunities in the Nursery for children to use language and think for themselves.

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

Although standards are below average by the end of Year 6, pupils' achievement is satisfactory. The trend since the last inspection is one of steady improvement to standards at the end of Key Stage 2 in English, mathematics and science. At Key Stage 1, pupils have made satisfactory progress, but improvement in standards in writing has been slow. Over the last year, the school has engaged in a programme to tackle the causes of this. Teachers in Years 1 and 2 are monitoring the progress of pupils more closely at an individual level and are setting challenging targets in reading, writing and numeracy. There is swifter identification when pupils are not on track to reach their targets. Focus groups for pupils who are underachieving are effectively supporting pupils to improve. There is clear evidence that this programme is having an impact, with most pupils making expected rates of progress.

The most able pupils make satisfactory progress, though there are occasions when their work does not challenge them sufficiently and they achieve less than they might. Pupils with learning difficulties achieve satisfactorily. Teaching assistants support them effectively with strategies and activities suitably matched to their abilities. Pupils at an early stage of learning English are supported well and effective links are established with home to support learning.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils have a good understanding of how to lead a healthy life. They are active at break times taking advantage of the activities that are available. Pupils engage enthusiastically with their learning. They enjoy coming to school and are pleased with the improvements to the school and feel they have helped to put these in place. Pupils' attendance is average and improving. The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils is good and contributes well to the friendly relationships within school. Older pupils care well for younger ones and are proud of the help they give to them with, for example, information and communication technology (ICT) skills. It helps them to feel, as one put it, 'more grown up'. This contributes to a strong sense of community within school where, in the words of one pupil, 'everybody works together'. Pupils say they feel very safe in school and have confidence in adults and other pupils to help with any problems. Incidents of racism and bullying are rare, but when they do occur, pupils are confident that they are managed appropriately. Pupils behave well. They are friendly, welcoming and polite to visitors. These qualities coupled with improving standards in basic skills contribute towards preparing the pupils for the next stage of their education.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teachers plan most lessons carefully, taking into account the different needs of learners, and the use of teaching assistants. In most cases, learning objectives are shared clearly and pupils settle easily to work. However, some lessons do not present the ablest learners with clear challenges and high expectations. Pupils make good use of regular opportunities to talk to partners about their work. There is good questioning of pupils that boosts their speaking and listening skills. This engages pupils actively in the lesson. On occasions, however, because the pace of a lesson is too slow, or because the teacher talks for too long, opportunities for active learning are limited so pupils' progress slows. There is good practice in marking that sets clear targets for pupils and makes clear to them what to do to improve their work. Some marking does not give pupils enough help to move their learning on and only rarely refers to pupils' individual literacy and numeracy targets.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The school's recently adopted approach to topics in the curriculum is increasing pupils' enjoyment. It is helping them make better sense of their learning with an emphasis on using skills learnt for a purpose. Recent improvements to ICT facilities mean that pupils can use computers more effectively to support their learning. The inclusion of pupils' views in topic planning is encouraging them to take greater responsibility for their learning. The school enriches the curriculum by providing French, visits to businesses like the bear factory and visits

from theatre companies. Pupils value these opportunities, and are motivated well to write about their experiences. Extended services and extra curricular activities have improved the range of additional opportunities available for pupils to extend their skills. A number of parents support the clubs by helping or instructing. These activities make a good contribution to pupils' personal development.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Parental responses to questionnaires indicate that they are confident their children are well cared for by the school. The school uses a range of good questionnaires to determine parents' views and then act on the analysis to focus on any concerns. The school forges good links with parents from minority ethnic groups including regular translation of documents. Leaders give a very high priority to safeguarding and protecting children. As a result, procedures are outstanding. Sound systems are in place to promote the learning of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Vulnerable pupils and their families receive effective additional support through close links with the school. This year, the school has increased the frequency of occasions when learners' progress is checked. This is beginning to improve the guidance given to pupils in their learning. Teachers are beginning to use assessment data more confidently to identify underachievement.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Recently the senior leadership has increased in size and strand managers have been appointed. This has strengthened the school's leadership and all are contributing to more effective monitoring of the school's work. This contributes to the school's satisfactory capacity to improve. However, the senior leaders' evaluation does not yet focus sharply enough on the impact of initiatives and improvements on the quality of teaching and on standards. Challenging whole school targets are in place but the links to individual pupil targets are not established consistently enough. Improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory. Standards have improved at Key Stage 2 and attendance has improved this year. Raising the achievement of pupils at Key Stage 1 has been slower, but the pace of change is now quickening. Governors have strengthened considerably and are contributing soundly to the monitoring and evaluation of the school's work. The governing body is now at full strength. All governors have been involved in training that is giving them the confidence to play a more active part in holding the school to account for its performance.

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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
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3

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 extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	3
The behaviour of learners	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?	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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	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

13 May 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of The Ridgeway Primary School, Berkshire, RG2 7EL

Thank you for welcoming the inspectors so warmly on our recent visit. Your school is a satisfactory school. I would like to share with you what the inspectors learnt about your school.

- You make satisfactory progress in your work, and even though standards are below average, they are improving. You are taught satisfactorily.
- You are happy at school and enjoy many of the activities and lessons that are available to you.
- You are polite and friendly to each other and to visitors.
- All staff and your headteacher care for you very well. As a result, you feel very safe in school and that there is always someone there to help you should you need it.
- Teachers encourage you to do your best and to work together to help each other. You do this well. I particularly like the way older Year 6 pupils help those from Reception with their ICT work.
- You behave well and your attendance is improving because most of you attend well.
- You try hard to put into practice what you have learned about being healthy. It is good to see you being so active at break times.

We have asked your headteacher and governors to make sure that some of you are set work that would give you more of a challenge and help you reach higher levels. We have also asked your headteacher and governors to make sure that your teachers' marking gives you good information to help you to improve your work and reach your targets. In the Nursery, we have asked the staff to plan more activities that encourage you to speak more often. We have also asked the headteacher and governors to check carefully and to make sure that these and other improvements are helping you to do better in your work. I hope you will help your headteacher and her staff to put these plans in place so that your school can keep on improving.

Ruth Westbrook

Lead Inspector