

John Rankin Junior School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	109825
Local Authority	West Berkshire
Inspection number	325037
Inspection dates	3–4 December 2008
Reporting inspector	Lorna Brackstone HMI

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 (total)	241
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Michael Seckington
Headteacher	Miss Sue Brown
Date of previous school inspection	19 September 2005
School address	Henshaw Crescent Newbury RG14 6ES
Telephone number	01635 42 859
Fax number	01635 522 889

Age group	7–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and an Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

This is an average sized school where very few pupils are eligible for free school meals. The proportion of pupils who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities is above average. This includes pupils who have moderate learning difficulties or behavioural and social problems. A small proportion of pupils are from minority ethnic groups but no pupil is at an early stage of English language acquisition. Most pupils transfer into the school from John Rankin Infant School, which shares the same site.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 4

In accordance with section 13 (3) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires special measures because it is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school.

At John Rankin Junior School too many pupils are underachieving. Pupils start Year 3 with above-average standards, however by the end of Year 6 standards are only broadly average. The quality of teaching is inadequate and, consequently, pupils do not make sufficient progress as they move through the school. Lessons are not sufficiently challenging or interesting to engage pupils in the development of their knowledge and skills and to enable them to progress well. Pupils do not receive enough guidance on how they can progress in their learning and consequently the quality of academic care, guidance and support for them is inadequate. Pupils' writing skills are weaker than expected for this stage of their education because teachers' expectations are low and the work set lacks challenge. However, pupils who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities make satisfactory progress because individual intervention programmes are effective.

Most teachers do not share expertise or learn from each other. There is much opposition to initiatives for school improvement. There is resistance to new ways of helping pupils with their learning which combined with a lack of unity among the teaching staff, has resulted in barriers to change which the senior leadership team has not been strong enough to resolve. There has been a lack of improvement since the last inspection. While there is resistance to change, the school cannot demonstrate the capacity to improve.

Pupils' personal development and well-being are satisfactory. Pupils are friendly and sensible young people who make the best use of social opportunities including the good range of extra-curricular activities such as sporting events and visits out of school. Satisfactory use is made of links with other schools and local businesses to promote a community spirit. However, plans to work with different ethnic and religious groups, and increase pupils' awareness about global diversity, are embryonic.

Most parents are happy with the school and consider that it has a 'friendly and approachable feel'. Many commended the dedication of the headteacher saying that she has an excellent rapport with the children and is well liked and respected by them.

What the school should do to improve further

- Strengthen the senior leadership of the school.
- Improve the overall quality of teaching and learning.
- Ensure that there is consistency and detail in the way that teachers help pupils move on to the next step of their learning.
- Rectify the underachievement in pupils' writing by raising teachers' expectations and ensuring that challenging tasks are set.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 4

Ineffective leadership, teaching that lacks lustre, and poor academic guidance and tracking of progress have resulted in pupils' inadequate achievement. Over the past two years, standards at the end of Year 6 have declined from above average to broadly average. Given that pupils start school with above-average attainment, this represents underachievement. While reading skills generally remain at a good level because of strong parental support, standards in writing decline as pupils move through the school. This is because teachers' expectations are too low and there is much use of photocopied sheets, which hinders independent learning. Well-focused individual support ensures that pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make satisfactory progress. However, insufficient use is made of the information the school gathers to address the needs of specific groups of boys or girls whose progress is too slow.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

Pupils enjoy coming to school and they attend regularly because they like meeting up with their friends. Behaviour is satisfactory overall but a few pupils misbehave in class when they are bored and not interested in their learning. Pupils contribute to the forming of school rules and differentiate between right and wrong. They understand the consequences of inappropriate actions. They know how to stay safe and have a good knowledge of why they must eat sensibly and keep fit. Serious notice is taken of pupils' views and the school council has contributed well to improving the provision for outdoor play and school meals. Raising funds for charities enable the pupils to reflect on and consider the needs of other people. Pupils make a positive contribution to the community in school and beyond by taking on roles such as playground buddies and house captains. Events such as the annual involvement with the Civil War Society, participation in local carol singing, and residential visits prepare the pupils satisfactorily for life in the wider community. Although pupils' mathematical and writing skills are not as good as they should be, links with a well-known car manufacturer and involvement in an enterprise project with the nearby secondary school contribute satisfactorily to their future economic well-being.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 4

Pupils do not make enough progress in their learning because the work set for them is often too easy. Too many lessons do not interest the pupils and they sit passively for long periods of time. Some react to this by showing indifferent attitudes to work and, at times, they misbehave. The pace of learning is slow and the needs of each pupil are not consistently met with suitable activities. In some lessons, teachers make effective use of interactive whiteboards to provide a visual stimulus for learning but use of resources to motivate pupils is undeveloped. Most of the pupils' work is regularly marked and positive praise is given. However, there is an inconsistency in the approach to marking and not all teachers give pointers to help individuals improve their work. Consequently, the next steps in learning are unclear for many pupils. Teachers often accept extremely untidy presentation in books without question. Whilst some

teaching assistants provide an adequate level of guidance for those pupils who find learning difficult, support staff are not always well deployed.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

Teachers are slowly adopting the revised national strategies for literacy and numeracy but these are yet to have an impact on standards. Although some good links exist between history, art and English, such as those to enhance work on the Second World War, not all teachers have made connections between subjects to help pupils learn in a more relevant manner. There are not enough planned opportunities to develop key skills using information and communication technology (ICT). The curriculum is not yet finely tuned enough to ensure that the most able pupils are always given suitably challenging work. Adequate provision for personal, social and emotional education is reflected in pupils' satisfactory spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Special events, including a visit by a storyteller and special themed days such as 'The Roman session', enhance the curriculum well. Links with a local sports college and involvement in local competitions make a good contribution to provision for physical education. The needs of those pupils who find learning difficult are satisfactorily met through intervention programmes, which are specifically designed to meet individual needs and are evaluated regularly.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 4

The arrangements to ensure pupils' health and safety in school are satisfactory. Child protection arrangements are securely in place. Parents confirm that the school has a caring approach and staff know the pupils well. However, pupils' care and safety is occasionally compromised when adults carry hot drinks while pupils are moving around the school. Vulnerable pupils are well cared for because there are good procedures in place to cater for their needs. The school makes adequate use of support agencies to provide appropriate specialist help where it is needed. The quality of academic guidance is inadequate. Until recently, there has been no systematic use of assessments to monitor and track pupils' progress. Consequently, pupils' underachievement has gone unnoticed. While some teachers have made a promising start on using targets to help move pupils on in their learning, there is a lack of consistency throughout the school and this is confusing for pupils.

Leadership and management

Grade: 4

Constant changes to the senior leadership team over the past few years, coupled with discord and a lack of unity among staff, have left the school vulnerable. Leaders have lost their focus on improving standards and, despite intensive external support, are failing to provide adequate direction. New middle managers are eager to make a difference to pupils' underachievement but are inexperienced and are not ready to lead the way forward. Governors know that the school needs to improve but they do not provide sufficient challenge to ensure that the changes required actually happen. Self-evaluation is poor because the systems in place to monitor and track the school's performance are weak. Evaluations are not robust or consistent enough and not all staff are committed to setting challenging targets and moving forward with school improvement.

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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?	4
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	No
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well being?	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	4

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	4
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	4
How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress	3

¹Grade 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.

Personal development and well-being

How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	3
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	3
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	3
The attendance of learners	3
The behaviour of learners	3
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 learners' needs?	4
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?	4

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	4
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	4
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	4
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	4
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	3
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	3
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	4
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	4
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	Yes
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Annex B

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

14 January 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of John Rankin Junior School, Newbury, RG14 6ES

I write to thank you for making inspectors so welcome at your school. We enjoyed spending time with you and finding out about John Rankin Junior School. Thank you to those pupils who talked to us about life in your school.

We liked how you gain confidence as you contribute to your own school and the wider community. You behave satisfactorily and particularly enjoy meeting your friends at school. Your involvement in sporting activities keeps you fit and you have a good knowledge of healthy foods. You appreciate the good range of enrichment activities on offer and extend your learning through the links with other schools and local organisations. You feel safe because the school looks after you and you talk confidently to a friend or a lunchtime supervisor if you have a problem.

Not all of your teachers provide sufficient challenge lessons for you. Lessons often lack interest and you do not receive enough consistent support to help you improve your work. The leaders of your school know that you are not achieving as well as you could, especially in your writing and have recognised the need to make the necessary improvements.

I have asked that your school receive special help so that you benefit from more good teaching and can all make better progress in your learning.

Once again, thank you for your help. Keep doing your best and working with the adults in the school to make sure that John Rankin Junior School improves rapidly.

Yours faithfully

Lorna Brackstone

Her Majesty's Inspector