

Riddings Junior School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	112497
Local Authority	Derbyshire
Inspection number	325617
Inspection dates	7–8 July 2009
Reporting inspector	Bob Roberts

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)	195
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Chris Hurt
Headteacher	Mrs Helen Littlewood
Date of previous school inspection	1 May 2007
School address	Church Street Riddings Alfreton Derbyshire DE55 4BW
Telephone number	01773 528492
Fax number	01773 528489

Age group	7–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors.

Description of the school

Riddings Junior School is smaller than average and the large majority of its pupils come from the village of Riddings or neighbouring Somercotes. The school building dates from 1845 and stands in extensive grounds. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is just above average. The large majority of pupils are from White British backgrounds and none are at the early stages of learning to speak English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is above average, with most of these having moderate learning difficulties. Pupils start school in Year 3. At its last inspection, the school was removed from the category of schools requiring special measures.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Riddings Junior School is a satisfactory school. It has a number of good features and improving rapidly. At its last inspection, it was removed from special measures having been placed in this category in November 2005. Since then there have been improvements in the curriculum, and in aspects of the care, guidance and support provided to pupils. Leadership and management have also developed well. Although the number of parents who responded to the inspection questionnaire was relatively small, the large majority of the responses were supportive of the school and recognised its improvement.

Pupils arrive at the school with levels of attainment that are broadly average. Standards at the end of Key Stage 2 remain broadly average and so achievement is satisfactory. However, the rate of progress that pupils make at the school now is improving due to the generally good teaching. Standards in writing are below standards in reading and numeracy. Pupils' personal development and well-being is good. Attendance improved after a dip in 2007/08, it is now good. Pupils enjoy school and behave well. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good, particularly their awareness of cultural diversity, which was highlighted as an area for improvement by the last inspection. As a result of sound academic achievement and good personal development, pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their lives.

In almost all provision is good. In its self-evaluation the school judged the quality of its teaching to be good and inspectors agree that overall it is good. However, some is inconsistent and its quality needs further strengthening in order that pupils' progress is consistently good across the school. In the last two years, improvements to the curriculum have been substantial. Links between subjects are good and a wide range of projects and events take place that motivate pupils well. Parents are particularly positive about the levels of care, guidance and support that pupils receive. The school has made a priority of ensuring that its curriculum is accessible to all and that it meets the individual needs of pupils. In this, it has been successful and the levels of care and academic guidance are good.

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher provides excellent leadership. Leadership is increasingly shared and a clear sense of common purpose exists. The role of subject leaders has developed to the point where they make a significant contribution to the work of the school. The morale of staff is high and they have a positive, confident view of the future. Governors fulfil their role effectively, supporting and scrutinising the work of the school. The school provides satisfactory value for money and the capacity to improve is good.

What the school should do to improve further

- Develop further opportunities for writing in order to improve pupils' rate of progress and standards in writing.
- Improve the consistency in quality of teaching so that it is at least good in all classes and progress becomes at least good across the school.

A small proportion of the 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

Pupils come to the school with levels of attainment that are broadly in line with expectations. Standards reached in the national tests at the end of Year 6 in 2007 and 2008 were broadly average. Test results for 2009 suggest that standards reached by the current Year 6 pupils will also be at average levels. The numbers of pupils reaching higher levels of attainment have improved in mathematics and are above average. However, in English and science the comparable numbers are below national averages. Standards in writing are below those in reading. Overall, achievement is satisfactory. Inspection evidence suggests that pupils have been making better progress since the school was removed from its special measures category than they were making beforehand. As a result of better teaching in many areas, current rates of progress are at least satisfactory and often good. The levels of attainment reached by boys are generally above those reached by girls. This runs against the national picture and results from the successful efforts to make learning experiences as active and interesting as possible. The school has made a priority recently of developing expertise and good practice in teaching methods that meet the needs of vulnerable pupils. As a result, those pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good and sometimes outstanding progress.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Personal development and well-being are good. Pupils enjoy their education and find lessons enjoyable, for instance, when they do mathematics outside, go on trips or do design and technology projects such as making chairs. Their enjoyment of school leads to good levels of attendance. Pupils behave well in lessons and this contributes to good levels of engagement in learning. They are attentive, courteous and respond well to their teachers. They have a good understanding of right and wrong. Pupils trust the adults who care for them. They know that they can approach them to talk about any issues. As one pupil indicated, 'She's my friend as well as my teacher.' Pupils have a good understanding of what it takes to stay healthy and they enjoy exercise. In Year 6, they also enjoy the responsibility of organising the sale of healthy snacks at break time. Good contributions to the community outside school include singing by the choir, running coffee mornings, working with the Guinness Trust and raising money for a range of charities such as Red Nose day and Children in Need as well as developing a link with Cambodia. There is an active school council although a number of pupils feel that this does not achieve as much as they would like, for instance more could be provided in the playground for use during break and lunchtime.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are good. Teachers know pupils well and are able to tailor the work to meet the needs of all. They cater well for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. These pupils take a full and active part in lessons. Teachers have good subject knowledge which, when linked to an enthusiastic approach, motivates pupils and develops positive attitudes to learning. Planning is collaborative and thorough, ensuring that classes are well organized. Teaching assistants are effective in supporting individuals and small groups. Learning objectives

are made explicit and learning targets for pupils at each attainment level are made clear. The pupils use these targets effectively to understand what they need to do to improve. Teachers employ a variety of assessment strategies and opportunities are available for pupils to learn to assess their own and others' work. Where practice is particularly good, pupils engage in a dialogue with the teacher about their learning. Teachers work together to consider learning and track pupils' progress so that additional work can be planned to consolidate learning and move pupils to the next levels. Towards the end of lessons, teachers do not always review and assess what children have learned effectively. Although most teaching is good, further improvement is required to ensure that all teaching results in pupils making at least good progress across the school.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum meets the needs of pupils well. Statutory requirements are met and the school is committed to making learning accessible to all and as interesting as possible. Trips to locations such as a local art gallery and to Chatsworth House broaden pupils' experience well. Activities such as den-building take good advantage of the school's extensive grounds and are used to stimulate interesting work in subjects like literacy. Projects such as the Year 3 food project and the recent plant sale bring parents into school, successfully involving them in their children's learning and the life of the school. Other projects such as the Costume Festival are effective at encouraging a wide range of skills as well as developing cultural awareness. All subject leaders are expected to consider how their subjects contribute to pupils' personal development and to their understanding of the world, both locally and globally. Opportunities are sought to encourage both teamwork and leadership. Assemblies provide appropriate opportunities for reflection and moral guidance. They promote a strong sense of community and well used to reward positive outcomes and celebrate achievements. The school arranges visits and activities which promote cultural understanding such as the visit to a Mosque in Derby. The school council has begun to consult pupils on what extra-curricular activities they would like to be available and this has led to a significant increase in the range of activities and to the levels of participation.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Care, guidance and support are satisfactory with some good features. All statutory requirements for safeguarding are in place and training is provided regularly so that staff are aware of their responsibilities for caring for the pupils. Teaching assistants are first aid trained. Records are kept of any incidents and accidents and these are followed up carefully. Academic guidance is strong with marking being very effective in identifying strengths and areas for development. Effective systems identify and support pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and the school has a strong ethos of inclusion. Staff work well with a range of outside agencies such as the educational psychologist and speech and language services to promote effective learning.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher has continued to provide excellent leadership since taking the school out of its special measures category two years ago. She has a clear vision for the school as a place where all pupils are included and where learning is relevant and enjoyable. She communicates this effectively to everybody concerned. A strong sense of direction and confidence will contribute to improve the school further. This confidence comes from the way in which long term goals are broken down into achievable steps. The headteacher is extremely effective at giving responsibility, providing support, but at the same time having firm expectations. The senior leadership team work closely together, monitoring developments closely and tracking the progress that pupils are making. Since the last inspection the role of subject leaders has developed significantly and they are now fully involved in building for the school's future. Leaders and managers feel supported but also made accountable for improvement. Careful consideration has been given by subject leaders as to how each subject can promote community cohesion. The curriculum has been effectively developed with this objective in mind. The capacity of governors has improved since the last inspection. Governors are effectively involved in planning, monitoring and reviewing the work of the school.

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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
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 capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

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/or disabilities make progress	2

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?	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	3
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	2
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	2

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of 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?	3

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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	2
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	2
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	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

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

9 July 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Riddings Junior School, Riddings, DE55 4BW

As you know, your school was inspected recently and this letter is to tell you about the results of the inspection. We very much enjoyed our visit to your school and would like to thank you for the friendly way in which so many of you greeted and spoke to us.

Your school is providing you with a sound education. The headteacher and all the staff are very committed to your welfare and progress. The school is improving rapidly and many aspects of it are good, particularly your personal development. We found that you enjoy school and behave well. Many of you are making a good contribution to the school and to the life of the local community. For example, your school council is leading you well in raising money for charity. Your attendance is good and you have good attitudes to learning. The adults that work at the school give you good care and support. They also guide you well when it comes to your lessons. The teaching you receive is generally good. The progress that you are making is satisfactory at the moment and we think it is improving. Most of you leave school having reached the nationally expected standards for your age. The school is preparing you well for the next stage of your lives.

Two things we have asked the school to do to improve. First, there is a lot of good teaching at the school and we want it all to be at least good so that you make faster progress. Second, we particularly want the school to give you more opportunities for writing so that the standard of your writing improves.

We are very confident that the school will continue to improve and we wish you all well for the future.

Yours faithfully

Bob Roberts

Lead inspector