

Ratby Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	119946
Local Authority	Leicestershire
Inspection number	327157
Inspection dates	3–4 March 2009
Reporting inspector	Christine Field

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 under pilot arrangements; it was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	292
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	David Lomas
Headteacher	Ann Husband
Date of previous school inspection	22–23 November 2005
School address	Main Street Ratby Leicester LE6 0LN
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Introduction

This pilot inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors. The inspectors visited 17 lessons and held meetings with governors, staff, pupils and parents. They observed the school's work and scrutinised documentation, including the school improvement plan, the assessment of pupils' progress, monitoring and evaluation information, minutes of governors' meetings and 113 parental questionnaires.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following:

- the quality of teaching, learning and pupils' progress in Key Stage 2 and particularly in mathematics
- the impact of the school's progress-tracking, monitoring and evaluation procedures in raising achievement, especially for more able learners
- the effectiveness of leadership, management and governance in raising standards and building secure capacity for sustained improvement
- the personal and social development of pupils

Information about the school

Ratby is a larger than average primary school. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is below average. Nearly all pupils are of White British heritage. The number of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is similar to that seen nationally. Pupils aged four and five, who are in the Early Years Foundation Stage, are educated in the Reception class. There are two intakes into this class, one in September and one in January. The school has been accredited with ECO school status for the third time. There have been recent significant staffing changes.

Inspection judgements

Grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Overall effectiveness

3

Capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

Ratby provides a satisfactory and improving education for its pupils. The school has good capacity to move forward, as demonstrated in its track record of improvement since the last inspection and reflected in the rising standards, good development in pastoral care, and the highly effective provision made for vulnerable pupils. Good quality provision has been sustained in the Early Years Foundation Stage. School self-evaluation is accurate and senior leaders have focused well on the priority areas to be tackled that will lead to better quality and outcomes. Their monitoring usefully includes a range of activities that provides the school with good information about how well it is doing. However, there is room for more precision in the focus of monitoring so that activities tie closely to the school improvement plan priorities and best practice can be shared more effectively.

In 2008, standards in Key Stage 2 dipped, with results being lower than expected, particularly in mathematics. School data indicate that predicted standards for the current Year 6 should return to the same good level seen in 2007. The use of challenging targets, close tracking of progress and developing use of assessment are key features in helping school leaders to ensure pupils achieve as well as they can. Nevertheless, there are still inconsistencies in planning, teachers' use of assessment and the pace at which pupils learn that require attention. Senior leaders are very positive role models as core subject leaders driving improvement and as high quality classroom practitioners. Their work as mentors to new staff and coaching of others is helping the currently satisfactory teaching and learning to quickly become more effective.

Pupils' attendance is good and they feel safe and happy at school and enjoy the wide range of curricular experiences provided. Pupils identify that they 'love school', especially their teachers and friends, and say there is nothing they would change. The very well established Eco Club and developing School Council enable pupils to play an important role in the daily life and development of the school and have their voice heard. Parents are overwhelmingly positive about the rounded education their children receive. Staff and governors are on board for the challenges ahead and the school ethos is upbeat and purposeful, with everyone sharing the same determination to do their best for the pupils.

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.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise standards in mathematics in Key Stage 2 and improve achievement, particularly for the more able learners, by:
 - ensuring that teachers specifically plan for and extend the learning of the more able pupils at a consistently good pace throughout lessons and ensure that all know their personal targets
 - targeting questions in the mental and oral sessions to help deepen pupils' thinking skills
 - providing time in the closing session in lessons for more able learners to assess how well they have achieved their objectives
 - using progress tracking information to pinpoint those capable of being fast-tracked in their learning and target intervention to the same good level for this group as for those experiencing difficulties.

- Strengthen monitoring further by:
 - focusing lesson observations and work sampling more precisely on the learning and progress of the top sets, and building in clear opportunities for staff to explore the evaluations and share best practice.

How good is the overall outcome for individuals and groups of pupils?

3

In Key Stage 1, pupils' attainment is typically above average. However, in 2008 fewer Year 2 pupils attained the higher Level 3 in writing than seen in previous years. The school has focused effectively on improving writing, and work in pupils' books from the last two terms shows good outcomes for the more able writers now in Year 3. Inspectors identified good standards of extended writing, for example in captivating adventure stories, factual pieces about life in an Indian village and very moving letters to Henry from Anne Boleyn while locked in the Tower of London.

In 2008, attainment in Key Stage 2 was broadly in line with the national average but the data showed that 11-year-olds were behind in the progress they made in mathematics. Pupils' progress is now back on track, with the work in mathematics books indicating that standards in Year 6 are at least at the level expected and rising to meet challenging targets. In a Year 6 lesson, more able learners were observed making excellent progress in solving multi-step problems and enjoyed their learning immensely. The buzz of activity was palpable as pupils were challenged in their thinking right from the outset. The 'thumbs up' technique was used very effectively by pupils to indicate their secure grasp of key learning points and enabled the teacher to move on quickly. Such good practice is not consistently used in all lessons.

Pupils with learning difficulties make good progress because the school supports

them well in small teaching groups for English and mathematics. The early morning intervention work, from Reception onwards, led by teaching assistants, is proving very beneficial in helping vulnerable learners to build confident key skills.

Pupils show very positive attitudes, positive behaviour and a willingness to do their very best. Relationships are harmonious and pupils' enjoyment of school is due to the warm and friendly atmosphere in which they learn. Pupils' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is good and this is helping them prepare well for future citizenship. Pupils say how safe they feel at school because 'staff listen to them and help out if there are any worries'. They have good awareness of how to stay healthy, with many regularly participating in the well organised lunchtime activities and after-school clubs.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	3
The quality of learning for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and their progress	2
How well do pupils achieve and enjoy their learning?	3
To what extent do pupils feel safe?	2
How well do pupils behave?	2
To what extent do pupils adopt healthy lifestyles?	2
To what extent do pupils contribute to the school and wider community?	3
Pupils' attendance	2
How well do pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being?	3
What is the extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development?	2

The quality of the school's work

Teaching is satisfactory overall, with consistently good or better teaching observed in the Reception class and Years 5 and 6 enabling good progress for all learners. Relationships between pupils and staff are a universal strength, as is behaviour management, which results in calm and purposeful learning. Good use of resources such as interactive whiteboards enrich the pupils' learning experiences. In the very best lessons, pupils' interest is engaged in purposeful and stimulating learning right from the outset. Teachers' well targeted questions extend pupils' knowledge and understanding and regular opportunities for self-review help keep a forward focus. Teaching is not yet good enough to ensure that all pupils learn well at all times. This is particularly the case in mathematics, where progress is more satisfactory than good. This is because not all teachers are yet using assessment information to plan and set work that provides sufficient challenge for the high flying mathematicians to move their learning forward at a good pace. Additionally, some pupils do not have a firm grasp on their targets in mathematics.

¹ Grades for attainment are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; 4 is low

Pupils experience a broad and balanced curriculum that helps them prepare for the next stage of education. The curriculum is enhanced well through good partnerships with other providers. For example, links with a language school enable all pupils in Key Stage 2 to receive expert tuition in French. Developing links with a local special school are adding value to the pupils' already strong personal, social, health and moral education. There is a range of sporting links that have broadened the curriculum for physical education, such as professional basketball coaching as well as 'Huff and Puff' sessions organised at lunchtime. Pupils say these help them to keep fit. Current plans include extending creative and cultural experiences.

Pupils are well cared for and supported. Those with learning difficulties are helped to build positive self-esteem and progress well. This is due to the school's positive partnership with parents, carers and outside agencies, and personalised learning support when it is needed. The school has been very successful in its work to help some of the most vulnerable learners combat personal barriers and enjoy achieving.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

High quality teaching and purposeful learning	3
Effective assessment	3
An appropriate curriculum which meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, provision through partnership with other organisations	3
Support, guidance and care	2

How effective are leadership and management?

There is strong commitment from staff and governors to improving the school's overall effectiveness from satisfactory to good and a clear set of strategies for enabling this. Since the last inspection there has been good investment in systems to enable senior staff to effectively track pupils' progress. Good impact is already evident in English and science, and the school's work to improve the outcomes for pupils in mathematics is proving positive. Good data analysis is informing the effective actions that support those pupils in danger of falling behind but has yet to be used specifically to target those capable of accelerated learning.

Following a dip in the quality of teaching, the school has worked very effectively to mentor and coach staff so that expectations remain high and teaching improves. Together with the headteacher, subject leaders undertake rigorous monitoring activities that provide an accurate view of strengths and weaknesses. They are checking the quality of teaching, but have yet to focus this more precisely on learning and to ensure that points for development are implemented consistently. Governors are supportive and show a real passion for the job and pride in the school. They use personal expertise well to inform their decisions and ensure that all legal requirements are fully met. Through their committees, such as curriculum, they monitor the school's performance but are not yet fully systematic in their approach. Governors are aware of the need to sharpen the indicators they use to gauge effectiveness, for example in promoting good community cohesion. The school is committed to partnership with parents and their views are canvassed regularly. Action is taken on issues which arise, such as parents' requests for a home-school

diary system. Close attention is paid to pupil and staff welfare, with all safeguarding arrangements found to be effective at the time of the inspection. Staff work successfully together to ensure that the pupils are nurtured and cared for well.

These are the grades for leadership and management

Communicating ambition and driving improvement	2
Promoting equality of opportunity and tackling discrimination	3
Ensuring that safeguarding procedures are effective	2
Ensuring that the governing body provides effective challenge and support so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities are met	3
Promoting the school's relationship with parents and carers, including their involvement in decision-making about matters relating to learning and well-being	2
Developing partnerships with other providers, organisations and services	2
Ensuring the school contributes to community cohesion	3
Deploying resources to achieve value for money	2

Early Years Foundation Stage

From their different starting points, boys and girls in Reception make equally good progress across all areas of learning because they are well taught. Children reach above national expectations by the end of the Reception year. Very skilful leadership of the Early Years Foundation Stage ensures that the children are well cared for and that new joiners settle quickly. Children's different and specific needs are assessed quickly, with well targeted intervention established to support their good learning and development. A small but significant group of children are being very effectively supported to develop their speech and language and their progress is good. Children's skills and talents are nurtured sensitively through a blended approach of child-initiated and adult-led activities. Children achieve well in personal and social development. They learn how to share and take turns and are encouraged to work cooperatively, for example when using construction materials to build a tower, a task that in the words of one boy was 'quite challenging'. Role play areas, such as the vet's clinic, are used well to extend the children's imagination, curiosity and creativity. The outside environment provides plentiful opportunities for children to improve their learning. The daily focus on communication and numeracy skills results in the children feeling confident to transfer to the National Curriculum when ready. The Early Years Foundation Stage leader has recently taken on the oversight of Key Stage 1. This is a good step forward in supporting a seamless transition for the children and ensuring continuing high quality experiences and outcomes.

How good are the outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage?	2
What is the quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage?	2
How effectively is the provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage led and managed?	2
Overall effectiveness: how well does the setting/school meet the needs of children in the Early Years Foundation Stage?	2

Views of parents and carers

Parents are overwhelmingly positive about the school, as shown in their responses in the questionnaire. They are particularly pleased with the rounded education their children receive within a happy, family atmosphere. Parents expressed no major concerns, though some flagged occasional issues with lunchtime supervision, and this was followed up by the inspection team. Lunchtime supervision is of good quality, with the pupils benefitting from a range of organised play opportunities under the watchful eye of staff and pupil 'buddies'. All other issues raised in the questionnaires were discussed with the school and the headteacher is taking action to ensure they are resolved.

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. In 2007-8, 15% of schools were judged to be outstanding.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well. In 2007-8, 49% of schools were judged good.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils. In 2007-8, 32% of schools were judged satisfactory.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves. In 2007-8, 5% of schools were judged inadequate.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.
Achievement:	an overall measure of the pupils' success in their academic learning. The term combines attainment and progress. Pupils might make good progress, for example, but if their attainment remains low, inspectors may judge that their achievement is only satisfactory.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.



5 March 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Ratby Primary School, Ratby LE6 OLN

Thank you for your friendly welcome when the inspectors visited your school. You told us that you enjoy school because you like your teachers and everyone gets on well together. We really enjoyed meeting the Eco Club members and School Council who are working hard on your behalf. We enjoyed having lunch with you and were very pleased to see you playing so nicely together and working hard during 'Huff and Puff' to keep fit. Here are some of the other things we found out about your school that we thought you should know.

- The very youngest children in Reception get off to a flying start and are well prepared to move to Year 1.
- Infant pupils learn successfully and achieve standards that are above average.
- Junior pupils achieve soundly overall, with many of you making good progress in Years 5 and 6 that enables you to reach your goals. Standards this year are set to be higher than last year and predicted to be above average overall.
- Teaching and learning are improving but are not yet good enough in order for all of you to reach the very best standards in your work in mathematics. We have asked the school to check that you are all being given sufficient challenge throughout your lessons. You may see the headteacher and the mathematics subject leader in some of your lessons as they work with your teachers to see how you are getting on.
- Some of you know your personal targets in mathematics and others are less sure. We have asked your teachers to make sure everyone is clear about the next step 'up the ladder' and that you move on as soon as you are ready.
- You feel happy and safe at school because all staff are caring and look after you well. This supports your good relationships with one another and very sensible behaviour. Those of you who experience personal difficulties can count on the school to provide very good support to help out.
- The headteacher, staff and governors are keen to build on strengths so that Ratby becomes an even better school. I am sure you will all do your very best to help them.

Good wishes and every success for the future,

Yours faithfully

Christine Field
Lead inspector

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