

Rothwell Junior School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	121855
Local Authority	Northamptonshire
Inspection number	327584
Inspection dates	1–2 December 2008
Reporting inspector	David Carrington

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)	321
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Bryan R Doughty
Headteacher	Lee Hurling
Date of previous school inspection	7 November 2005
School address	Gladstone Street Rothwell Kettering NN14 6ER
Telephone number	01536 710349
Fax number	01536 713299

Age group	7–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Rothwell Junior School is larger than most junior schools. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is above average. Very few pupils speak English as an additional language. Nearly all the pupils are from White British backgrounds. The proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals is average. In recent years, pupils had average levels of skills and knowledge when they started in Year 3, although this year more pupils started at below average levels. The headteacher took up post in September 2008.

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 provides a satisfactory education. Recently, there have been a number of improvements to the quality of its work and pupils' achievement. Over the last few years, standards have hovered at an average level or just below. Currently, they are average in all four year groups and staff are working well to raise them further. This is particularly the case in English, where standards have generally been a little lower than in mathematics and science. The school has been successful in lifting standards in writing and at present standards are average in this aspect of English. Pupils, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, achieve satisfactorily. There is now much evidence to show that progress is quickening due to improvements in the quality of teaching.

At present, leadership and management are satisfactory but there are signs that this too is improving. The new headteacher has raised the expectations of staff and pupils and has welded staff into a team that is working well together to make sure that innovation results in a better deal for the pupils. The headteacher has the vision to lead the school to greater effectiveness and is providing strong direction to meet his aspirations for the school. The new team of year group leaders have a strong conviction that provision can be better. They have made a promising start, including the development of an effective system of sharing challenging targets for pupils' achievement and marking of work so pupils know how well they are doing and what must come next.

The quality of teaching is satisfactory. The proportion of good lessons is increasing well. Staff are eager to improve their expertise and to share the strengths of teaching so that all pupils benefit from them. At present, planning for the needs of the more able pupils and ensuring their work is demanding enough are not consistent across the school. The curriculum is good. Not only does it cover all subjects in depth, it includes some high quality opportunities for pupils to develop their personal, social and health education, their achievement in art and to take part in a good range of out-of-school sports activities. The school provides effective care, guidance and support for pupils and they are safeguarded well.

One of the school's biggest successes is to be found in the good personal development and well-being of pupils. Their enjoyment of school is immense and infectious. They have good knowledge of health and safety matters. In an assembly observed by inspectors, the pupils showed their good knowledge by identifying suitable clothing for a number of scenarios, such as taking a dog for a walk down a village street at night. Behaviour is good, which is recognised by the parents. All but one parent responding to the questionnaire indicated they judged behaviour to be good. The pupils make a good contribution to their school community and that in the town. They are involved well in local events. Their preparation for life outside school and secondary education is satisfactory. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural education is good, although there is more work to be done to ensure all pupils have a full understanding of the diversity of cultures and traditions in Britain today.

The new system of tracking pupils' progress has merits and is being used suitably by key leaders to measure the success of the school. At present it does not take sufficient account of the challenging targets set for the pupils. It identifies clearly how well each pupil has achieved to date but does not show strongly enough how this level matches the target for the end of each year and for the end of school. In other respects, senior leaders have an accurate view of the school's performance. The checks on teaching quality and the standard of work in pupils' books

are rigorous. Governors are appropriately involved in the school's work and are increasingly asking critical questions to make sure pupils' achievement is the best possible.

There has been good recent improvement to provision and standards. Management routines to make sure the school moves ahead with success are being established well. For the future, the school has good capacity to make the satisfactory things good and the good even better.

What the school should do to improve further

- Increase the demands made of the more able so they all reach standards that are high enough.
- Make sure that the school's challenging targets are used to confirm all pupils are well on track to reach the best standards possible.
- Improve pupils' knowledge and appreciation of the diverse faith and cultures present in Britain today.

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

Standards are average, but rising, and pupils' achievement is satisfactory and improving. They progress appropriately in all aspects of English. The quality of pupils' written work is better than it was and is of the expected standard. The work for middle and lower ability pupils and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is suitably matched to their needs and effective support by teaching assistants ensures they progress steadily.

In mathematics, standards are average and pupils achieve satisfactorily. The focus on problem solving and investigation has been increased and this is helping pupils consolidate their learning. Achievement and standards in science are as expected for pupils' ages. The school makes careful provision for information and communication technology (ICT) and pupils build skills and knowledge at the expected rate. There is evidence of good achievement in art, history and sports.

The more able do not always reach high enough standards, which senior leaders acknowledge. This is because planning does not always identify the additional expectations for this group. Some work is too similar to that for the rest of the class to provide the necessary challenge.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils are very keen to come to school and attendance is average. Their great enjoyment is reflected in their good behaviour. A few pupils have social, emotional and behavioural needs that mean their behaviour is not always as good as other pupils' conduct. These pupils are managed well and most of the time they work soundly in lessons. A small number of pupils are concerned about bullying but most say this is not common and that it is dealt with instantly.

There is much pride in the school amongst the pupils. Therefore, they are polite, hard working and kind to others. Pupils help each other without being prompted. The sense of community in school is good. Pupils' many sensible ideas for improvements to lessons, the buildings and school routines are acted upon whenever possible.

While pupils have good opportunities to reflect on their learning and the attractive things that surround them locally, such as the historical buildings in the town, this does not extend fully to the knowledge of other cultures in Britain. However, their own cultural identity is strong and the school's traditions of art, music and drama productions are at the root of this.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Whilst teaching quality is satisfactory at present, there are positive signs that all staff are working to make it better. The satisfactory teaching is leading to pupils making expected rates of progress. Staff are keen that progress becomes good and know that, to achieve this, the quality of their work must improve as well. During the inspection, good teaching was evident, and some was outstanding and all pupils' progress in these lessons was rapid.

Staff recognise that lesson planning can be refined to ensure the work is hard enough for all abilities, especially the more able. There are some effective routines in lessons to speed progress and make the work taxing, such as timed literacy and numeracy tasks. The pupils relish this and put in double the effort to finish, accurately, on time. Opportunities such as this are spreading across the school but are not yet consistent enough.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The links between subjects are being developed well. Examples were observed during the inspection of pupils working on a history theme in art lessons and developing their literacy skills in history. ICT is used appropriately to support learning in other subjects.

There is a good range of out-of-school activities. Central to this are sports and drama events, where pupils' achievement is good. Pupils' creativity is developed well. The school has the 'Artsmark' award in recognition of its good quality work to develop standards in art. The displayed artwork, including the ceramic houses arranged to represent Gladstone Street, is often of high quality.

The school has developed good partnerships with outside agencies and individuals to improve the learning opportunities for pupils. These are being extended through the development of greater links with the local infant and secondary schools. There is work to complete to develop stronger partnerships with schools and community groups with a more mixed cultural or faith background. Parents are pleased with the range of opportunities to help their children progress in school.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The school has shown great success in helping pupils who have not done well in other schools. There have been no exclusions during the last few years. The caring ethos helps vulnerable pupils settle well in school and to progress as well as the other pupils. The same holds for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Their individual work programmes contain step-by-step targets in literacy and numeracy that are assessed carefully to show the progress being made. Teachers and teaching assistants help these pupils reach their targets and support in lessons is focused well on their needs.

Guidance to help pupils improve their work is good. There is an effective system of marking that shows pupils their successes and areas to improve next. In lessons, there are ample opportunities for pupils to evaluate their own learning and that of their partners. This means they have good knowledge of the next steps they must take. The tracking of pupils' progress is diligent but is not fully related to the levels expected by the end of the year or the end of the key stage.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The new headteacher has made an excellent start in revitalising the expectations of pupils' achievement. Like the middle management team of year group leaders, he has not been long enough in post for the full impact of new initiatives to take hold. Nonetheless, improvement is already evident in teaching and learning and, importantly, in achievement and standards. These things are satisfactory still, but the prospect of good improvement in the future is strong because everyone in school, staff, governors, pupils and parents, recognise its strengths and are agreed where and how improvement can be achieved. The school promotes community cohesion satisfactorily. While there is good work to help pupils take their future role in local society, the focus on the worldwide community is less evident. There is a good sense of urgency in work to raise standards. Leadership provides a firm steer to ensure the school's development priorities are met.

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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	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?	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
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	1
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 learners' needs?	3
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?	2

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	2
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 eliminated	2
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	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

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

3 December 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Rothwell Junior School, Rothwell, NN14 6ER

We want to thank you for the welcome you gave us when we came to Rothwell recently. You helped us learn a lot about your school, especially how much you enjoy being there. We think your school is providing you with a satisfactory education, but also that it is improving lots of things for you. In our report, we have written about the most important things in school. These include:

- you reach the expected standards because you make satisfactory progress
- you are well behaved, kind and thoughtful about others
- there are lots of good opportunities for you to do well in art, sports and drama
- you are taught satisfactorily and there are now more good lessons than there used to be
- your lessons are interesting and enjoyable
- all the adults in school look after you well
- Mr Hurling has made a great start as your headteacher and has lots of ideas to make the school even better than it is
- your parents are particularly pleased you go to Rothwell Junior School.

There are three things we think can be improved to help you do even better in your work.

- The tasks for the more able could be harder so they reach the highest standards.
- Your teachers should make more use of your targets to show them whether you are doing well enough.
- There could be more chances for you to find out about the different cultures and faiths in Britain today.

We know you will help your teachers make these improvements. As a start, you could share with your teachers your ideas about how to find out more about other people's lives.

We hope you do well in your school work.

Yours sincerely

David Carrington

Lead inspector