

John Ray Junior School

Inspection report

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|--------------------------------|-------------------|
| Unique Reference Number | 115028 |
| Local Authority | Essex |
| Inspection number | 338494 |
| Inspection dates | 7-8 December 2009 |
| Reporting inspector | Norma Ball |

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

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|--|--|
| Type of school | Junior |
| School category | Community |
| Age range of pupils | 7-11 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number of pupils on the school roll | 361 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair | Mrs Dorothy Griffin |
| Headteacher | Mrs Verity Boreham |
| Date of previous school inspection | 25-26 June 2007 |
| School address | Notley Road Braintree Essex CM7 1HL |
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by four additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 14 lessons, and held meetings with the headteacher, senior leadership team, teaching staff, governors and pupils. They observed the school's work, and looked at samples of pupils' work, management and curriculum documentation, systems for tracking pupils' progress, safeguarding documentation and 97 responses to parental questionnaires.

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

- the strategies in place to help raise boys' attainment in English and science
- the effectiveness of the strategies and support provided to raise attainment for pupils with special education needs and/or disabilities and those with English as an additional language
- how well staff use what they know about pupils to ensure they are appropriately challenged and make the best progress they can, especially higher ability pupils
- how well the curriculum meets the needs of pupils including those who are underachieving
- the effectiveness of all leaders and managers in monitoring and evaluating the work of the school, bringing about improvements and raising the achievement of different groups of pupils.

Information about the school

John Ray is larger than most junior schools and shares a campus with an infant and secondary school. A smaller than average proportion of pupils are from minority ethnic backgrounds and a few of these have English as an additional language. The number of pupils entitled to free school meals is increasing but remains below average. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is above the national average and includes pupils with moderate learning difficulties and speech, language and communication needs. The school has gained the Healthy Schools award.

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

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

3

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

3

Main findings

John Ray Junior School provides a satisfactory education. The effect of strong leadership, better teaching and good behaviour within the school is helping to improve progress since the previous inspection. Pupils enjoy their learning and find the majority of lessons involve and interest them. One pupil wrote in a poem to describe their feelings, 'Happiness is learning new things'. Adding to pupils' enjoyment of learning is the good quality care they receive.

Attainment meets national averages in English, mathematics and science. Standards have been stubbornly average for some time but progress is beginning to accelerate as a result of improved teaching. However, the consistent improvement in teaching has been interrupted by staff absences and as a result the progress made by pupils is uneven across the school. Progress has improved in Years 3 and 6 but remains satisfactory in Years 4 and 5. Pupils with special education needs and/or disabilities and those whose first language is not English make good progress as a result of the careful assessment of their needs and good support they receive. Good strategies to interest and involve boys in English and science lessons are also showing early signs of success. Pupils who find learning easier do not make as much progress as they should because the work set for them does not challenge them sufficiently. The quality of the marking is not consistent and as a result pupils are not always clear about how they can improve their work and hence make better progress. The curriculum is satisfactory with a variety of enrichment activities to extend learning. However, the school is aware that more opportunities to extend pupils' literacy and numeracy skills can be created through linking subjects.

Pupils' personal development is promoted well. They feel safe and cared for in school because the procedures to ensure their well-being, health and safety are good. Behaviour has improved since the last inspection and is good both in lessons and around the school. A few pupils with particular difficulties, and sometimes substantial barriers to learning, are managed well and the school is a happy community in which all are equally valued. The school promotes community cohesion soundly but not enough work has been undertaken to extend pupils awareness of the British community beyond their town.

At the heart of the improvements emerging in all areas of the schools work is the strong and committed leadership of the headteacher. Staff are united and inspired by her determination to drive the school forward and accelerate the progress made by all pupils. Governors are supportive of the school and have a clear understanding of

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the areas for development. Experienced and new governors recognise the need to improve their skills so that they can ask challenging questions of senior staff and play a full part in strategic planning. Good strides forward have been made in a short time and the school is soundly placed to continue this improvement.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise attainment in English, mathematics and science by:
 - setting higher challenge and planning work more closely matched to individual learning needs, particularly for more able pupils
 - ensure consistency in marking so that it explores with pupils where and how they can improve their work.
- Enhance the curriculum so that it includes better links between subjects and provides more opportunities for pupils to apply their literacy and numeracy skills.
- Develop community cohesion by identifying and planning a set of activities to extend pupils' awareness of the wider society within Britain and monitor the impact of these actions.

About 40% of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

3

Pupils make satisfactory progress in their learning. The school has focused with care on improving behaviour and the success of this is evident throughout the school. Pupils settle quickly, are keen to participate in discussions and have a positive approach to learning. They work together well and especially enjoy sharing ideas with their partners. A few pupils can become distracted in lessons but teachers are quick to re-engage them and lessons proceed at a good pace. Pupils know what they are expected to learn in lessons and clear targets identify the next steps in their learning. Test results indicate that pupils make satisfactory progress and attainment is average at the end of Year 6. This has been a consistent picture for the past three years.

Work seen in lessons, in pupils' books, and the school's own tracking, indicate that progress is improving as a result of improvements in the quality of teaching and in the accurate use of assessment data. However, the trend in improvement is not consistent across all year groups or for different groups of pupils. Progress is better in Year 3 and 6 because teaching is consistently good. Some year groups have been affected by staffing disruptions resulting from the long term absence of senior members of staff and have lacked a consistent lead from very experienced teachers. Pupils with special education needs and/or disabilities and those for whom English is

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a second language make good progress from their individual starting points. Many have low skills but their needs are carefully assessed and they receive good support which inspires confidence and develops their learning. The promotion of improved progress for higher ability pupils has lagged behind and not enough reach high levels in their work. This is because staff do not set consistent high expectations for this group.

Pupils are clear about how they are expected to behave and show a sensitive understanding of the needs and feelings of others. They like school as their good attendance indicates. Older pupils comment on the improved behaviour around the school and take a keen pride in the part they play in making school a happy and stimulating place. Pupils often reflect on their behaviour and how it effects others, discuss their feelings and enjoy finding out about other faiths. As a result their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Pupils understand the importance of fitness, exercise and eating a healthy diet. Almost all pupils participate in 'fit bods' and the school council are making recommendations about healthy lunchboxes following their recent survey. Pupils have a good range of responsibilities within their school and links with the local community are growing. The sound academic skills that they acquire and their good personal development ensures they are satisfactorily prepared for the next stage in their education.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

| | |
|---|----------|
| Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning | 3 |
| Taking into account: | |
| Pupils' attainment ¹ | 3 |
| The quality of pupils' learning and their progress | 3 |
| The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress | 2 |
| The extent to which pupils feel safe | 2 |
| Pupils' behaviour | 2 |
| The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles | 2 |
| The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community | 2 |
| The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being | 3 |
| Taking into account: | |
| Pupils' attendance ¹ | 2 |
| The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development | 2 |

How effective is the provision?

Teaching is good but not consistently so across the school. Teachers organise

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low

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classrooms well and create a welcoming learning environment. Their subject knowledge is generally good and there is some good use of open questions which prompt pupils to develop their understanding. Teachers use a good range of strategies and generally set pupils interesting activities which help them develop ideas and secure their understanding. However, there are some common weaknesses relating particularly to pupils of higher ability, which have been identified in school and confirmed during the inspection. The school has good procedures for tracking the progress pupils make, but most teachers do not use what they know about their progress to set work that really extends more able pupils as effectively as other groups. Sometimes too much time is spent on an area of learning that these pupils have mastered and this limits their rate of progress. There is a clear marking policy but often marking is not helpful in advising pupils how to improve a piece of work. Teaching support assistants are well deployed, work in good partnership with teachers and provide overall good support to pupils who find learning difficult.

The curriculum ensures an appropriate range of learning experiences for pupils. Cross-curricular project work is developing through the school. However, there are insufficient opportunities for pupils to expand their literacy and numeracy skills in interesting ways by linking with other subjects. Lessons topics have been reviewed to ensure they interest boys, especially in English and science. In a science lesson on forces, for example, different metal weights were wrapped as gifts and boys participated enthusiastically in working out the force needed to pull Santa’s sleigh. Learning is extended well beyond the classroom through a good range of extra-curricular clubs and activities. Pupils enjoy this area of their learning and clubs are well supported. One pupil said, ‘There are plenty of good things about this school and I really, really enjoy it.’

Pupils are well supported in their personal development and the care and guidance they receive is good. As a result they are confident in the staff who care for them and will share their concerns and seek help when they need it. The good care provided in school is extended by well developed links with a good network of external support. A wide range of different intervention strategies are used to support pupils’ different needs including their social and emotional development. A good example of this is the lunch time provision for pupils who do not wish to play outside. Activities arranged for them are both supportive and educational and even include work on the other faiths such as work on the Hindu festival of Diwali.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

| | |
|--|----------|
| The quality of teaching | 2 |
| Taking into account: | |
| The use of assessment to support learning | 2 |
| The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils’ needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships | 3 |
| The effectiveness of care, guidance and support | 2 |

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How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher provides high quality leadership which has been instrumental in securing improvements in all areas of the work of the school in a short time. Some improvements are more advanced than others. There is no complacency rather, a strong ambition to bring about further improvement and so move the school forward. This vision and drive is shared by all staff. The headteacher has a clear view of the quality of teaching which has improved as a result of challenge and support. Tracking of pupils' achievement over time has been securely established, is carefully analysed and any dips are identified. Improvements in pupils' progress are emerging and plans to consolidate and extend this are incisive. The senior leaders provide good leadership through year and subject teams and all planned developments within the school are linked securely to appropriate staff training.

Governors know the school well. They are taking steps to improve their skills so that they rely less on what the headteacher tells them but can independently investigate the schools performance and form an independent view of improvements.

Safeguarding requirements are met well. The school community is harmonious and free of discrimination where all pupils know that they are valued equally as individuals. The improvement of links with parents is a priority and meeting with steady success, as shown in the improved response to annual reports. Nevertheless it is recognised that there is further work to be done to extend and strengthen these links. There are good links with other local schools, especially the adjacent infant school. Productive use of a range of supportive services is made and the pupils participate enthusiastically in a range of local Braintree community events. However, planning to extend pupils understanding of the wider dimension of their own country and prepare them for the future role as citizens is not sufficiently developed.

These are the grades for leadership and management

| | |
|--|----------|
| The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement | 2 |
| Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning | 2 |
| The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met | 3 |
| The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers | 3 |
| The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being | 2 |
| The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination | 2 |
| The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures | 2 |
| The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion | 3 |
| The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money | 3 |

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Views of parents and carers

The majority of the 27% of parents who returned the questionnaire were positive in their views of the school. In particular they felt their children enjoyed school, were safe and helped to have a healthy lifestyle. About one third of parents expressed concerns about the school, mostly in terms of unacceptable behaviour, the progress made by their child and how well their child's needs were met, and the account taken of their suggestions and concerns. The improvement of behaviour has been a strong focus throughout the school. Pupils and staff were clear that behaviour has improved. During the inspection behaviour in lessons and around the school was good. A few pupils with challenging behaviour are well managed by staff. Pupils progress is carefully tracked, all pupils make at least satisfactory progress and there are clear plans to accelerate progress for all groups within the school. Leaders and managers are aware that further work remains to be done to improve links with parents.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted’s questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at John Ray Junior School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 97 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 361 pupils registered at the school.

| Statements | Strongly agree | | Agree | | Disagree | | Strongly disagree | |
|---|----------------|----|-------|----|----------|----|-------------------|---|
| | Total | % | Total | % | Total | % | Total | % |
| My child enjoys school | 50 | 53 | 41 | 43 | 4 | 4 | 0 | 0 |
| The school keeps my child safe | 37 | 39 | 59 | 61 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| The school informs me about my child’s progress | 27 | 28 | 60 | 63 | 8 | 8 | 1 | 1 |
| My child is making enough progress at this school | 28 | 29 | 55 | 57 | 12 | 12 | 2 | 2 |
| The teaching is good at this school | 27 | 29 | 60 | 64 | 6 | 6 | 1 | 1 |
| The school helps me to support my child’s learning | 23 | 24 | 63 | 66 | 9 | 9 | 1 | 1 |
| The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle | 34 | 35 | 58 | 60 | 5 | 5 | 0 | 0 |
| The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment) | 30 | 32 | 56 | 60 | 7 | 7 | 1 | 1 |
| The school meets my child’s particular needs | 26 | 27 | 54 | 57 | 12 | 13 | 3 | 3 |
| The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour | 22 | 24 | 55 | 60 | 8 | 9 | 7 | 8 |
| The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns | 15 | 17 | 62 | 69 | 10 | 11 | 3 | 3 |
| The school is led and managed effectively | 26 | 28 | 60 | 65 | 4 | 4 | 2 | 2 |
| Overall, I am happy with my child’s experience at this school | 34 | 35 | 52 | 54 | 8 | 8 | 2 | 2 |

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

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. |
| Grade 2 | Good | These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well. |
| Grade 3 | Satisfactory | These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils. |
| 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. |

Overall effectiveness of schools inspected between September 2007 and July 2008

| Type of school | Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools) | | | |
|----------------------|---|------|--------------|------------|
| | Outstanding | Good | Satisfactory | Inadequate |
| Nursery schools | 39 | 58 | 3 | 0 |
| Primary schools | 13 | 50 | 33 | 4 |
| Secondary schools | 17 | 40 | 34 | 9 |
| Sixth forms | 18 | 43 | 37 | 2 |
| Special schools | 26 | 54 | 18 | 2 |
| Pupil referral units | 7 | 55 | 30 | 7 |
| All schools | 15 | 49 | 32 | 5 |

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above were reported in The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills 2007/08.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

Common terminology used by inspectors

| | |
|----------------------------|--|
| Achievement: | the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training. |
| Attainment: | the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons. |
| 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. |
| Learning: | how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners. |
| Overall effectiveness: | <p>the following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement. ■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils. ■ The quality of teaching. ■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships. ■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support. |
| 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. |



9 December 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of John Ray Junior School, Braintree, CM7 1HL

Thank you for the warm welcome you gave to us when we visited your school. All the inspectors commented on how polite and friendly you were. You were happy to talk to us about your work and the exciting things you learn in school.

We saw that you behave well in lessons and at playtime. Teachers teach you well and you enjoy your lessons. Adults take good care of you so you feel safe and are confident to ask for help when you need it. You told us that you enjoy taking part in making your school a happy place and you are proud to take on responsibilities such as school councillors or play leaders. Your headteacher leads your school well and is working hard with the rest of the staff to help you do the best you can.

We think that John Ray is a satisfactory school. This means that it does some things well, but also needs to make some things better.

- To help you make better progress in English, mathematics and science we have asked your teachers to make it clear when they mark your work exactly how you can improve it. We have also asked that they always give you work that is not too easy and not too difficult but makes you think hard and make better progress, especially those of you who find learning easier.
- We have asked that you have lots of chances to improve your literacy and numeracy skills by using them more often in your work on other subjects.
- We have asked your school to help you to understand more about the country in which you live.

You can help by working hard and always doing your best in school.

We wish you every success for the future.

Yours sincerely

Norma Ball
Lead Inspector

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