

Radburn Primary School

Inspection report

Unique reference number	117354
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	385862
Inspection dates	16–17 May 2012
Lead inspector	Jeremy Spencer HMI

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	227
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Lorna Alcock
Headteacher	Linda Meredith
Date of previous school inspection	7 March 2011
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Age group	3–11
Inspection date(s)	16–17 May 2012
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Introduction

Inspection team

Jeremy Spencer

Her Majesty's Inspector

John Collins

Additional Inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. The inspectors observed 15 lessons, taught by 10 teachers, spending eight hours observing teaching and learning and two assemblies. The inspectors observed the school's work, including pupils' exercise books. They looked at a variety of documents, including the school's improvement plans, pupil assessment data, the school's self-evaluation, and leaders' monitoring summaries. Meetings were held with staff, the Chair of the Governing Body, a local authority representative and representatives of the academy to which the school will be joined from September 2012. Inspectors interviewed two different groups of pupils and listened to them read. Responses were also considered on 32 questionnaires from parents and carers, 19 from staff and 104 from pupils.

Information about the school

The school has fewer pupils than most primary schools but the number of pupils on roll is rising. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is above the national average. The large majority of pupils are from White British backgrounds. The proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs is above average. Children join the school's Early Years Foundation Stage provision at the age of three.

There is a specially resourced provision for pupils with special educational needs on the site, known as the 'Primary Support Base' (PSB), which is managed by the governing body. This provides for up to eight pupils, aged 7 to 11 with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties, and was part of the inspection. There is a children's centre and a pre-school club on site but these organisations are not managed by the governing body and are subject to separate inspection.

The school will become a fully sponsored academy from September 2012 and will be re-named Garden City Academy. The PSB will transfer back to local authority control.

The latest published data from May 2011 shows that the school does not meet the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress. The school was given a notice to improve by Ofsted when it was inspected in March 2011. A monitoring visit in November 2011 found that the school was making satisfactory progress in addressing its areas for improvement and in raising pupils' achievement. More than 80% of teachers are new to the school since the inspection in March 2011.

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	3
Achievement of pupils	3
Quality of teaching	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils	3
Leadership and management	3

Key findings

- The school provides a satisfactory standard of education. It has successfully addressed key weaknesses identified in the last inspection. It is not yet good because some teaching is not securing consistently good progress for pupils, particularly in reading and mathematics. In accordance with section 13 (5) of the Education Act 2005 Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the school no longer requires significant improvement. Schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.
- The PSB supports pupils with behavioural, social and emotional difficulties well and they achieve satisfactorily in terms of academic achievement and behavioural outcomes.
- Teaching has improved significantly since the previous inspection. Although satisfactory, inadequate teaching has been eradicated and there is now enough good teaching to ensure that most pupils make accelerated progress. Pupils' attainment in reading, writing and mathematics is still below average across the school but gaps in attainment between different pupil groups caused by previous underachievement are closing. There are some inconsistencies in teachers' expectations of pupils reading and calculation skills. Some teachers do not assess pupils' learning in lessons well enough. As a result, they do not always recognise misconceptions in lessons, or re-shape learning tasks to meet pupils' needs, particularly for more-able pupils.
- Pupils' behaviour and attitudes to learning are improving quickly. Behaviour in the playground and in classrooms is mostly positive, although some low level disruption occurs in a small minority of lessons. Attendance is rising rapidly and is now close to average. These key factors, combined with improved teaching, are underpinning pupils' improved progress in learning.
- The headteacher provides effective and determined leadership. She is supported by senior and middle leadership teams growing quickly in confidence and ability. There have been significant changes in the composition of the leadership team since the last inspection and this has slowed the pace of change in some areas, as new leaders have taken time to settle into their roles.

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Arrangements for monitoring the impact of the school's actions, including the governing body in holding the school to account, lack rigour.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching so that the large majority is good or better in order to raise pupils' attainment and increase their rate of progress by:
 - ensuring greater consistency and quality in the teaching of letters and sounds (phonics), particularly in lower Key Stage 2
 - implementing a comprehensive calculation policy, to ensure consistency of approach between teachers and a greater understanding of expectations to improve pupils' calculation skills across the school
 - improving teachers' assessment skills to ensure that they more swiftly identify when pupils are ready for the next steps in learning, particularly more-able pupils
 - developing teachers' confidence in re-shaping learning activities during lessons to better meet pupils' needs.

- Strengthen the quality of leadership in and management of the school by:
 - improving the quality and effectiveness of leaders' action plans by ensuring that they clearly identify who will be monitoring the impact of each action, when this will be, and how they will do it
 - build upon improvements in leadership skills to increase the impact of the work of the middle leaders and the governing body.

Main report

Achievement of pupils

Children begin the Early Years Foundation Stage with skills well below those expected for their age, particularly in their personal, social and emotional development and in their communication, language and literacy skills. Historic data show that overall attainment, including in reading, at the end of Key Stages 1 and 2 has been stubbornly low in recent years. Pupils' attainment is still below average. However, pupils' progress is accelerating and attainment is rising. Pupils in Year 6 are on track to meet government floor standards in 2012.

The large majority of parents and carers at the school believe their children make good progress at school. Inspection evidence shows that different groups of pupils, including those who are disabled or have special educational needs, those known to be eligible for free school meals, and those in the PSB, make satisfactory progress. Children make good progress during the Early Years Foundation Stage. They make satisfactory progress overall as they move through Key Stages 1 and 2, although progress slows during Year 3.

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Although attainment is rising, some gaps in pupils' learning remain, particularly in the development of calculation skills and in their understanding of letters and sounds. The school is addressing these issues well in the Early Years Foundation Stage and in Key Stage 1, where pupils make stronger progress in developing these skills. For example, pupils were observed making excellent progress in a Year 1 mathematics lesson, as they used counting blocks to help develop their understanding of basic multiplication. More-able pupils were able to work competently with a range of other multiplication strategies. Pupils gain satisfactory reading skills and understanding of text. However, there remain weaknesses in lower Key Stage 2, where the teaching of calculation and phonics lacks focus.

Quality of teaching

The large majority of parents and carers who responded to the questionnaire believe that their children are taught well. The quality of teaching is satisfactory, and, as a result of pupils' recent improved progress, they achieve satisfactorily. Most teachers have high expectations of pupils, and motivate and build their self-esteem skilfully and effectively. As a result, pupils show tenacity and a determination to succeed.

Teachers usually make clear to pupils how they will know they have achieved the lesson aims, with good use of ways to measure success. For example, pupils are able to select ways of measuring success from three different levels of challenge in each literacy or mathematics lesson. Older pupils in particular use these well to help fully guide their work. Some teachers do not expect enough of pupils, particularly the more-able. This means that these pupils take part in learning activities which are too easy and make slower progress than they could, particularly in learning about letters and sounds and in mathematics in lower Key Stage 2. On some occasions, where the quality of teaching is weaker, teachers fail to check pupils' progress in lessons frequently enough. As a result, misconceptions are sometimes missed and learning activities are not adjusted to fully meet pupils' needs.

Inspectors observed several examples of outstanding teaching during the inspection. In these lessons, teachers ensured that the needs of all pupils were very well met. Teaching was imaginative and made very good use of time to secure excellent progress. For example, in a modern foreign languages lesson in Year 5, the teacher and teaching assistant generated great enthusiasm from pupils while they learned the French words for different animals and their features.

The additional needs of pupils who are disabled, have special educational needs or are in danger of falling behind are quickly and efficiently identified and these pupils are supported appropriately. A range of interventions, including one-to-one tuition and additional emotional and behavioural support, meet pupils' needs and are enabling them to catch up for prior underachievement. As a result, these pupils are making satisfactory but improving progress. Teaching assistants have high expectations of pupils and make a good contribution to learning.

Teachers have worked effectively to improve the quality of learning environments since the last inspection. Stimulating and well-organised displays are used well to

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support learning. For example, in the Early Years Foundation Stage, children learned effectively in imaginatively organised indoor and outdoor areas, with access to a broad selection of role-play opportunities.

Teaching in the PSB is well planned and meets the needs of the pupils attending. Staff ensure that pupils are well cared for and communicate effectively with staff in other settings to help ensure continuity of progression and support.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

The majority of parents, carers and pupils believe that there is a good standard of behaviour at the school. However, some express concerns. The behaviour and safety of pupils are satisfactory. Since the last inspection, staff have raised their expectations of behaviour, secured pupils' greater engagement in learning and attendance has improved. A new behaviour policy and behaviour code has been introduced, following consultation with pupils, parents and carers. Pupils say that there is now a better understanding of the consequences of poor behaviour in the classroom, and that pupils have chosen to focus more on learning as a result. Inspectors observed pupils responding well to teachers' use of the behaviour code in lessons. Where teachers applied the code rigorously, behaviour was often good. However, some teachers did not follow the code as well as others and where this was the case, behaviour was often no better than satisfactory. Inspection evidence confirms that pupils accessing the PSB make satisfactory progress in improving their behaviour and attitudes to learning. During the inspection pupils were observed enjoying learning, working calmly, and developing skills effectively as they took part in baking and writing activities.

Several pupils commented positively on how well behaviour has improved in the playground, since a rule was introduced to stop pupils from 'play-fighting'. Exclusion rates have dropped significantly since the same period last year. The large majority of pupils say that they feel safe in school. The few who say they do not, express concerns over the behaviour of one or two individual pupils. However, all pupils spoken to during the inspection say that staff now deal with incidents of poor behaviour effectively, and say that they feel comfortable about approaching staff to express any concerns. Incidents of different types of bullying are unusual but are dealt with appropriately and effectively. Pupils demonstrate a satisfactory understanding of what constitutes an unsafe situation.

Past poor attendance links closely with previous low attainment. Since the last inspection, the school has implemented a broad range of attendance improvement strategies. These have made a positive impact and attendance has risen sharply. Attendance in the current academic year is only slightly below the national average.

Leadership and management

Since the last inspection, the school has undergone many staff and leadership changes. The headteacher, supported by the governing body, the local authority and representatives from the academy, has worked with great determination to address effectively the school's weaknesses. Newly appointed staff have been well supported

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and have settled into their roles quickly. This means that despite many changes, the school has maintained sufficient momentum to overcome weaknesses and improve the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement. The school's leadership team continues to strengthen, and the successes of the last year indicate that it is strong enough to accelerate momentum further and continue to drive improvement.

Staff cohesion is strong and there is a shared and clear understanding of the school's priorities. Actions plans clearly identify how weaknesses will be addressed. However, they do not outline who will be monitoring the impact, when monitoring will take place and how. This makes it difficult for leaders, including the governing body, to measure the full impact of actions taken. School leaders, are developing good systems to further improve their efficiency and oversight of the school's performance, but acknowledge that there is more work to do. The Chair of the Governing body has a good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses but overall, the governing body provides only satisfactory challenge in holding leaders to account for the school's performance.

The curriculum is satisfactory and meets the needs of different groups of pupils. It is enriched by a broad range of school trips and after-school clubs. This supports the satisfactory development of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination satisfactorily, and as a result, gaps in achievement between different groups of pupils are closing. All safeguarding policies and procedures are securely in place and consistently applied.

The leadership of the PSB is good. Leaders successfully ensure that provision is tailored to meet the needs of individual pupils. Consequently, they are able to access learning and become involved in the life of the school.

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

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	54	42	2	2
Primary schools	14	49	32	6
Secondary schools	20	39	34	7
Special schools	33	45	20	3
Pupil referral units	9	55	28	8
All schools	16	47	31	6

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September to 31 December 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Attendance:	the regular attendance of pupils at school and in lessons, taking into account the school's efforts to encourage good attendance.
Behaviour:	how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Floor standards:	the national minimum expectation of attainment and progression measures.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the governors and 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:	inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school.
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.
Safety:	how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



18 May 2012

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Radburn Primary School, Letchworth Garden City, SG6 2JZ

Thank you for being so helpful and friendly when we visited your school recently. We enjoyed talking to you and hearing some of you read. We are very pleased to see that your attendance has improved so well since inspectors last visited your school. Well done! Please also pass on our thanks to your parents and carers for filling in a questionnaire about the school. All these views were helpful to us in making our judgements.

The school has made some important improvements since the last inspection and now provides a satisfactory standard of education. The Primary Support Base provides satisfactory support for those of you who need help in managing your behaviour. You are now making better progress in your learning because behaviour and attendance have improved and because your teachers and other staff have worked well to improve the quality of teaching. Even though the school has improved since its previous inspection your headteacher, the governing body and other leaders want the school to get even better. To help them achieve this we have asked them to do these things.

- Improve teaching so that you achieve more, by making sure that teachers check on your work more often in lessons and help you to improve.
- Make teaching of letters and sounds better, especially in Years 3 and 4, and help you improve your calculation skills.
- Check more carefully to see how well the school is improving, so that school leaders can make better decisions about what to do next.

You can all help too by making sure that you try as hard as you can in all of your lessons, and continuing to come to school as often as possible.

Thank you once again for your help during the inspection. We wish you all well for the future.

Yours sincerely

Jeremy Spencer
Her Majesty's Inspector

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