

Risdene Academy

Newton Road, Rushden, NN10 0HH

Inspection dates 2–3 June 2015

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected as an academy	
	This inspection:	Requires improvement	3
Leadership and management		Requires improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Early years provision		Requires improvement	3

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement. It is not good because

- Pupils do not make consistently good progress in reading, writing and mathematics due to variations in the quality in teaching across the school. Not all teachers have high expectations of what pupils can achieve.
- The gap between the achievement of disadvantaged and other pupils is too wide.
- Pupils do not always present their work neatly in their books. Teachers do not always give pupils precise guidance on how to improve their work; therefore pupils often repeat mistakes.
- Teachers do not give pupils opportunities to apply their mathematical skills and knowledge to solve problems. Consequently, progress slows for some pupils.
- School leaders do not have a fully accurate view of the school's effectiveness. Their plans for improvements do not always focus on the most urgent priorities.
- Governors do not have a strong enough grasp of all aspects of the school's work. The support and challenge they are able to provide to improve the quality of teaching and achievement are not as effective as they could be.
- The early years' provision requires improvement as there is variability in the quality of teaching and staff do not always intervene quickly enough to help children make the best progress.

The school has the following strengths

- The headteacher has taken strong action to ensure that any inadequate teaching has been removed. He has also ensured that there are good systems in place to support and care for any pupils whose circumstances might make them vulnerable.
- The school has created an environment in which pupils are keen to learn and are well behaved in lessons and around the school.
- The school's promotion of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. The school is a happy and harmonious place where pupils feel safe.
- Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs make good progress because they receive good support from teachers and other staff.
- Teaching is good in Year 6, which accelerates pupils' progress.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed teaching and learning in 17 lessons or parts of lessons. A number of lessons were observed jointly with the headteacher and acting deputy headteacher.
- The inspectors looked at work in pupils' books and listened to pupils read. They met two groups of pupils to gain their views of the school. The inspectors observed pupils' behaviour at breaktime, lunchtime and at the end of the school day, as well as in lessons. They attended an assembly.
- The inspectors looked at a range of documentation, including: assessments and records of pupils' progress; the school's checks and records relating to safeguarding, child protection and attendance; records of how teaching is managed; and the school improvement plans.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher and other staff, including senior and subject leaders. The lead inspector met with the Chair of the Academy Advisory Body (the governing body), and had a meeting with a representative of the Multi-Academy Trust.
- The inspectors took account of the 33 responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View, talked to parents at the beginning and end of the school day and considered letters from parents. They also looked at the 34 responses to the staff questionnaire.

Inspection team

Adam Hewett, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Jane Mellor	Additional Inspector
Simon Harbrow	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Risdene Academy converted to become an academy school on 1st June 2013. When its predecessor school, Newton Road Community Primary School, was last inspected by Ofsted, its overall effectiveness was judged to be good.
- The school is part of the Education Fellowship Multi-Academy Trust.
- The school is larger than the average-sized primary school.
- Children in the Reception classes attend full time.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils – those who are eligible for pupil premium funding – is above average. The pupil premium provides additional funding for pupils eligible for free school meals and those who are looked after.
- Most pupils are of White British background. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds is below that in most schools.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is above average compared to similar schools nationally.
- The school runs a daily breakfast club for its own pupils. After-school provision operates on the school site but it is privately run and is, therefore, inspected separately and not included in this inspection.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics.
- An acting deputy headteacher has been in post since November to cover the temporary absence of the post holder.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching from Reception to Year 5 so that it is consistently good or better and raise pupils' achievement in reading, writing and mathematics by ensuring that:
 - all teachers, including those in Reception, have sufficiently high expectations of the standards that pupils can and should achieve
 - teachers follow the school's agreed marking policy and provide pupils with clear guidance to help them improve their work
 - more opportunities are provided by all teachers for pupils to use and apply their mathematical skills and knowledge to solve practical problems
 - all disadvantaged pupils receive appropriate individual additional support that accelerates their progress, particularly in English and mathematics.
- Improve leadership and management, including governance by:
 - ensuring all aspects of the school's work are systematically checked by school leaders and the outcomes are used to identify clear priorities for improvement
 - further developing the governing body's effectiveness in monitoring the work of the school to ensure that school leaders are consistently challenged and held to account for the progress pupils are making
 - at every assessment point, systematically checking the gaps in achievement between disadvantaged pupils and their peers to determine which strategies are the most effective for improving their progress.
- Improve provision in Reception by ensuring that all adults understand how to develop children's enquiries and interests through timely interventions and probing questions.

An external review of the school's use of the pupil premium should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

An external review of governance should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management requires improvement

- Leaders do not have a fully accurate view of the school's effectiveness. This means that plans for improvement are not directly matched to the most important priorities.
- There remain inconsistencies in the quality of teaching. Leaders have taken steps to improve teaching by observing lessons, analysing progress data and looking at pupils' books. A whole-school approach to coaching and mentoring all teachers is now in place. While this has had an impact, particularly in sharing good practice across all staff and eliminating any inadequate teaching, it has not yet ensured that all teaching is good or better.
- Leaders have not used the extra support enabled by pupil premium funding, including an additional teacher and one-to-one tuition, well enough to focus on the specific needs of all the eligible pupils. The gap in achievement between these and other pupils remains too wide.
- The headteacher and other leaders work closely with the Trust to monitor the work of the school and identify where improvements are needed. Reviews are held four times a year and opportunities for sharing expertise from across schools within the Trust are developing. However these systems are new and have not yet made the required impact on teaching and achievement. The Trust is becoming effective in both supporting and challenging the school. It plays an important role in the strategic governance of the school.
- Subject leaders are becoming increasingly effective in bringing about improvements within their areas of responsibility. They are involved in monitoring and evaluating the quality of teaching and its impact on pupils' achievements. They have accurately identified and acted upon priorities for improvement including the teaching of writing and a revised, whole-school approach to the teaching of mathematics.
- The headteacher has ensured that pupils behave well in school and understand the need to show consideration for others. His deep understanding of the varying and at times complex social needs of the pupils enables him to provide effective support systems so that pupils feel safe and secure in school.
- There is an inclusive culture in the school. Pupils are treated equally. Leaders effectively tackle any discriminatory behaviour and ensure good relationships between staff and pupils. However leaders are aware that some pupils are not learning as well as they might.
- Staff help pupils to appreciate the importance of key British values such as respect and tolerance. Pupils' understanding of democracy has been promoted by elections for the school council and opportunities to become prefects; pupils conscientiously undertake their roles as representatives. The school's emphasis on developing these values is successful in preparing pupils well for life in modern Britain.
- The curriculum has been revised since the start of the school year and is now broad and balanced and contributes well to the good promotion of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. It offers pupils a range of topics which capture their interests well. Staff ensure that all pupils have equal opportunities to participate in a wealth of enrichment activities. Pupils of different ages who attend the breakfast club get on well together and enjoy the range of activities provided for them.
- Leaders use the additional funding the school receives for sport effectively. Pupils benefit from an increased range of physical activities and teachers' confidence and skills in leading these activities have been successfully developed. As a result, pupils are developing their physical fitness and understanding of how to live a healthy life.
- Arrangements for the safeguarding of pupils meet statutory requirements. Staff know who to report to if they have any concerns. All necessary checks are carried out on staff, volunteers and governors to ensure that pupils are safe.
- The large majority of parents who responded to the Parent View questionnaire expressed confidence in

the work of the school. The school's own recent survey of parents indicated high levels of satisfaction.

■ The governance of the school:

- Most members of the governing body have recently taken up their posts and have not as yet had time to develop their roles in challenging and supporting school leaders to improve teaching and achievement.
- While the headteacher's reports provide governors with information on pupil performance they have not yet developed their own systems for checking on the quality of teaching and its impact on pupil achievement and this limits their effectiveness. The Chair of the Governing Body makes regular visits to the school and is aware of how groups of pupils are achieving but other governors have less first-hand experience.
- Governors are well informed about the outcomes of teachers' performance management reviews and make sure that teachers' pay is linked to pupils' progress.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- The school has a clear and effective behaviour policy that is implemented by all adults in school. An effective system of monitoring and managing any behaviour incidents, involving a group of staff who meet together weekly, helps to ensure that the school is a calm and welcoming place.
- Pupils know what is expected of them and show consideration for each other. Pupils understand that they are responsible for their own behaviour and there are consequences for both themselves and others should they behave in ways that are unacceptable.
- Good attitudes to learning are fostered from the moment that children enter Reception. Pupils told inspectors that they enjoy school. Pupils behave well in lessons and show positive attitudes towards their learning. Occasionally, when the teaching is less engaging, some pupils lose concentration.
- Pupils play together sensibly on the playgrounds. They behave well in the dining room and when moving around the school. Pupils wear their uniform with pride. They look after the school site, making sure there is no litter.
- Leaders have been successful in helping pupils who have had difficulty in the past in managing their behaviour; exclusions from school for poor behaviour are reducing in number.
- The school works hard to ensure that parents and pupils understand the importance of arriving at school on time and attending regularly. A parental support worker works effectively with families to develop responsible attitudes towards attendance. Whilst attendance is still slightly below average, it has improved and the proportion of pupils who are absent from school regularly has decreased.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Members of staff are vigilant and levels of supervision across the school are high. Pupils feel safe in school and have confidence in adults to look after them.
- There is a coordinated approach to supporting pupils who might be at risk. Skilled, trained staff keep clear records of meetings and interventions, and ensure that thoughtful and well planned support for pupils and their families is readily available.
- Pupils say there is very little bullying and that when it does occur teachers and other adults deal with it quickly and effectively. The school gives a high priority to developing pupils' understanding of the different types of bullying, including cyber-bullying, and this is reflected in their knowledge of the impact it can have on other people. A minority of parents who responded to the on-line Parent View survey felt that the

school does not always deal effectively with bullying, but well-kept records and the views of pupils indicate that bullying is dealt with effectively.

- Pupils have a good understanding of how to keep themselves safe, including water safety and when crossing the road. All pupils learn the importance of not sending unkind text messages and how to remain safe when using the internet.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- Teaching requires improvement because the quality of teaching has been too variable over time and teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve have not been consistently high enough. As a result, not all pupils have made the progress that they are capable of as they move through the school. Good teaching in Year 6 has been effective in helping these pupils make good progress by the time they leave the school.
- Teachers do not consistently set tasks for pupils that are accurately matched to their abilities. Work in some books is untidy or incomplete. Not all teachers accurately follow the school's policy on marking. Some marking fails to make clear what pupils need to correct or add to improve their work.
- Leaders' monitoring of teaching has been successful in identifying and eradicating any inadequate teaching. However, some inadequate teaching in the past has led to gaps in some pupils' knowledge and understanding.
- The teaching of writing has improved and there are now more opportunities for pupils to write extended pieces of work. However, basic mistakes in punctuation and spelling are not always picked up so that the same mistakes continue to be made. The presentation of work in some books is untidy, with too little attention paid to the quality of handwriting. A recently introduced, whole-school policy on handwriting has been introduced, but it is too early to see the impact of this in all classes.
- The teaching of calculation skills in mathematics has been revised to match the requirements of the new National Curriculum. Calculation skills are taught systematically and generally effectively. However, pupils are given too few opportunities to apply their knowledge to make decisions and solve problems.
- Reading skills are mostly taught well and this is having a positive impact on pupils' achievement. A whole-school approach to the teaching of phonics (the sounds that letters make) helps pupils to develop their early reading skills. Guided reading lessons help all pupils gain a deeper understanding of what they are reading. For example, in a Year 6 lesson, following the confident reading of a section of *The Hobbit*, the teacher asked challenging questions that were well matched to the different abilities within the class.
- The school has a systematic approach to assessing pupils' progress. Opportunities for teachers to meet together to compare their judgements both within school and with teachers from other schools are being developed. This helps to ensure that teachers can accurately plan for pupils next steps in learning and set targets for achievement.
- Relationships are positive between the pupils and adults. The pupils respect adults and listen carefully to instructions from teachers and to each other when sharing ideas and opinions.
- Teaching assistants are generally used well to support pupils in their learning. They work alongside individual pupils and with small groups and help to ensure that pupils understand what is expected of them and are confident to attempt new work.

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- The progress pupils make across the school has not been consistently good enough to ensure that they all reach the levels of which they are capable. In 2014, the pupils in Year 6 attained average standards in reading, writing and mathematics in the end of Key Stage 2 tests. For most pupils, this represented at

least good progress and was an improvement on 2013. However, disadvantaged pupils made less progress than other pupils in school and the gaps in their attainment have not closed sufficiently. Progress is not consistent across other year groups and, as a result, some pupils do not achieve as well as they could.

- In the 2014 Year 6 national tests, disadvantaged pupils were five terms behind other pupils in school in mathematics, eight terms behind in reading and five terms behind in writing. The gap between these pupils and other pupils nationally was six terms in mathematics, seven terms in reading and five terms in writing. Current school data indicate that these gaps are narrowing for pupils in Years 4 and 6 but that there are still gaps in attainment against other pupils in school.
- Pupils in Year 2 in 2014 achieved average standards in reading, writing and mathematics in the national assessments. Disadvantaged pupils were below other pupils in school and their achievement is still not good. Evidence gathered during the inspection and school data indicate that attainment this year will be similar.
- Work in pupils' books, school data and other evidence gathered during the inspection indicate that progress across different classes and year groups is not consistently good. While pupils currently in Year 6 are making at least the progress that is expected of them, this is not the case for all other pupils.
- The most able pupils make at least similar progress to that of their classmates. In 2014, the proportion of pupils in Year 6 attaining Level 5 was average in reading, writing and mathematics. They made particularly good progress in mathematics.
- The progress of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs is good. This is because the school provides tailored and individual support that is well matched to pupils' needs. The special educational needs coordinator tracks the progress of individual pupils carefully and ensures appropriate support is put in place where necessary.

The early years provision

requires improvement

- Children enter the early years' provision with levels of development that are below those typical of their age. In 2014, a slightly above-average proportion of children attained a good level of development. However boys' attainment was well below that of girls in school and was below national performance. In this respect, boys are not as well prepared as they could be for Year 1. Children who are disabled or have special educational needs achieve in line with their peers.
- Teaching requires improvement because adults do not provide sufficient direction for children's learning and do not have consistently high enough expectations of what children can achieve. Therefore, activities are not always sufficiently challenging to develop all children's communication and language skills. Activities are not always closely matched to the varying needs and interests of the children and this slows their progress, especially that of boys.
- Leadership requires improvement. While acknowledging that currently leadership arrangements are temporary, the systems used to monitor teaching are not fully effective in ensuring that all children have consistently good teaching and are making rapid progress in developing their skills.
- Staff provide good opportunities for children to develop an interest in books. The teaching of early reading is effective, with good teaching of early phonic skills and knowledge.
- Children make good progress in their personal, social and emotional development. They settle well into school routines, enjoy learning and behave well.
- There are good relationships between school and home. Children are very well cared for and kept safe at all times. Arrangements for sharing information on children's progress with parents are good and parents value and appreciate the care that is taken to make sure that the children make a positive and happy start at school.

What inspection judgements mean

School	Grade	Judgement	Description
	Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
	Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
	Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
	Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	139757
Local authority	Northamptonshire
Inspection number	449965

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	317
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Chris Goodwin
Headteacher	Andrew Sears
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected as academy
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