

Ranikhet Academy

Spey Road, Tilehurst, Reading, Berkshire RG30 4ED

Inspection dates

11–12 December 2018

Overall effectiveness	Inadequate
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Inadequate
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Inadequate
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Inadequate
Outcomes for pupils	Inadequate
Early years provision	Inadequate
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an inadequate school

- Safeguarding is not effective. Practice across the school does not reflect the school's policies and systems do not ensure pupils' safety and welfare. Safeguarding records are unreliable and not fit for purpose.
- Trust directors, local governors and senior leaders have been too slow in securing improvement. They do not monitor the school's work closely enough. Their actions have not had enough impact on improving the quality of teaching or accelerating pupils' progress.
- The executive headteacher has been in post since September 2016. All other leaders are inexperienced or very new to their roles. The school is overly reliant on external support and lacks the capacity to improve as rapidly as it needs to.
- The wider curriculum is inadequate and does not meet pupils' needs. Planning is poor and teachers' subject knowledge is variable. Consequently, pupils' knowledge and skills across a wide range of subjects are not developed sufficiently.
- Currently, there are weaknesses in provision in mathematics and English across the school, particularly in key stage 2.
- The support for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) has been poor in the past. New leadership has not had time to implement the required improvements. Over time, pupils with SEND have made limited progress and they continue to do so.
- Assessment systems are not yet reliable. As a result, many teachers' expectations are too low. Teachers do not intervene and adapt teaching quickly enough to prevent groups of pupils, including the disadvantaged, most-able and those with SEND, from underachieving.
- Absence and persistent absence rates have been well above the national average figures for some time. Very recent actions to address this issue have not had time to demonstrate sustained impact.
- Many parents and carers have lost faith in the school and the numbers on roll have declined.

The school has the following strengths

- The teaching of phonics is effective and this supports younger pupils to make a strong start in developing their reading skills.
- Good relationships and bright, stimulating learning environments support children in early years to engage in their learning well.

Full report

In accordance with section 44(1) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires special measures because it is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve leadership and management by ensuring that:
 - urgent reviews are conducted to safeguarding procedures, so that records are reliable and accurate, and all potential welfare and well-being concerns are acted on promptly, appropriately and effectively
 - governors fully evaluate and monitor all safeguarding, safety risk assessment and medical recording systems in order to hold leaders to account for their actions to support the most vulnerable pupils
 - the leadership of SEND is sufficiently rigorous, and strategies are implemented to improve provision and ensure strong pupil progress
 - middle leaders are suitably skilled, so that they can support the drive for rapid improvement
 - all staff have consistently high expectations of pupils' progress
 - the multi-academy trust and governors fully evaluate the impact of additional funding on disadvantaged pupils' outcomes and personal development
 - leaders improve the breadth and quality of the curriculum by ensuring that teachers' planning systematically develops pupils' knowledge and skills in science and the foundation subjects
 - relationships with parents are strengthened to restore trust in the school's work
 - the physical education (PE) and sport premium funding is used effectively to increase pupils' participation in regular physical activity.
- Improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment, by ensuring that teachers:
 - consider what pupils know and can do and provide teaching that builds on their knowledge and understanding and matches their needs
 - deploy support staff more effectively to improve pupils' outcomes, particularly those pupils with SEND
 - raise their expectations of what pupils can achieve and increase the level of challenge for the most able pupils
 - develop pupils' reasoning and problem solving in mathematics
 - promote the sequential development of reading and writing skills more effectively, particularly in key stage 2.
- Improve attendance, particularly for those pupils who are persistently absent.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Inadequate

- The school has experienced considerable challenges in recruiting and retaining staff over recent years. This has resulted in turbulence in senior leadership and in teaching staff. The executive headteacher has been in post since September 2016. Other leaders are inexperienced and/or relatively new to their current roles in the school and are being supported in their roles by the multi-academy trust.
- Leaders and governors have not secured the necessary sustainable improvements in pupils' outcomes, attendance and the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. This, coupled with a series of errors and omissions in safeguarding practices, indicate that leaders have not demonstrated proven capacity to bring about such improvement in the future.
- Senior leaders have accurately identified strategic priorities for the school and started to act to address these. However, very recent changes in approach, for example to assessment and improving attendance, have not shown a measurable impact on pupils' outcomes.
- The school's curriculum is particularly poor. Leaders have failed to implement a broad curriculum that develops pupils' knowledge and understanding across a range of subjects over time. A lack of subject leadership in science and the foundation subjects, poor planning and weaknesses in teachers' subject knowledge result in inconsistencies in curriculum provision across key stages 1 and 2.
- Standards in reading, writing and mathematics are too variable. Too many pupils are not well prepared for the next stage of their education. This is because leaders' actions to improve teaching have not been swift and decisive enough to ensure that pupils make strong progress in different subjects and in all year groups.
- Leaders' actions to address gaps in pupils' learning, particularly those of disadvantaged pupils and pupils with SEND, are ineffective. Leaders' and teachers' expectations of what these pupils can achieve are not ambitious enough, which means that such pupils receive insufficient challenge. Similarly, leaders have not ensured that the work provided for the most able pupils is suitably challenging and so they do not do well enough.
- SEND funding is not being used effectively. New leaders of SEND have not had sufficient time to address serious weaknesses in provision in the past. While leaders have an awareness of pupils' specific needs, the school's own assessment arrangements for this group are imprecise. Pupils' books show that too few of these pupils make enough progress from their starting points.
- Leaders' use of the pupil premium funding is ineffective because too little analysis is done of the barriers to learning faced by these pupils. Consequently, disadvantaged pupils' outcomes are not rising rapidly and the differences between the achievement of this group and that of other pupils nationally are not closing consistently.
- The PE and sport premium is used effectively to offer a range of sports for pupils. The school's own PE staff deliver a range of engaging team sports and gymnastics. However, the school's own analysis identifies that the proportions of pupils, including

disadvantaged pupils, participating in extra-curricular sports clubs declined significantly last year. Leaders do not yet have strategic oversight of participation rates this year and their use of the PE and sport premium funding is not securing improvements.

- Leaders and governors have received support from REAch2 multi-academy trust (REAch2) to support improvements in the teaching of mathematics and English and with key aspects of leadership, including safeguarding. The inexperience of many leaders means that there is an over-reliance on this support, which limits the school's capacity for sustained improvement.
- Some of the parents who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, and several parents whom inspectors met during the inspection, expressed concerns about the leadership of the school. These included worries about pupils' behaviour, the progress their children make and the quality and ease of communication between parents and staff. A significant minority of parents reported that their children were not happy here.
- It is recommended that the school should not appoint newly qualified teachers.

Governance of the school

- The local governing body oversees Ranikhet Academy as well as REAch2's other two academies in Reading. The local governing body has three separate committees to oversee the running of each of the three schools. The Ranikhet ROSE committee is made up of mainly experienced educationalists, as governors, appointed by REAch2, along with three members of staff. The chair and vice-chair are highly experienced and have served as governors of other schools for many years. There is currently a vacancy on this local committee for a parent governor.
- REAch2 trustees and local governors are aware of many of the school's shortcomings. They have facilitated a range of training and support for new leaders and sought external validation of safeguarding systems and moderation of teachers' assessments. However, trustees and governors have been too accepting of the reports they have received. They have not challenged leaders, or held staff sufficiently to account, in order to prevent a serious decline in standards over time. For example:
 - they have not provided robust and appropriate levels of challenge to leaders when teaching standards were reported to them as inadequate
 - they have not made sure that additional funding is spent effectively to meet the needs of pupils. This includes monitoring the impact of funding for pupils with SEND, the pupil premium funding and the PE and sport premium.
- Governors are aware that the school's website is not compliant with regulations. More needs to be done to ensure that all policies and required information published on the school's website are fully up to date.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are not effective.

- The school's designated safeguarding lead (DSL) is the head of school. As she is new to post, she is supported in this aspect of her work by the trust safeguarding lead from REAch2. In addition, there is a deputy DSL and there is always at least one of them on site to respond to any issues that may arise. All three safeguarding leads have received up-to-date training.
- Governors and leaders have not ensured that the school implements procedures outlined in its own safeguarding policy or the latest government guidelines and legislation robustly enough.
- The school's record keeping of concerns relating to vulnerable pupils and systems used to refer concerns to external agencies is wholly inadequate. Omissions, inaccuracies and inappropriate responses were seen in several individual files relating to pupils' welfare and well-being. Immediate action is needed to ensure that complete, accurate and detailed central records are kept of the actions taken to support each vulnerable pupil.
- Leaders and governors have not monitored how effectively and swiftly the actions taken by the school's DSLs support the most vulnerable pupils. This includes when it is necessary to make safeguarding referrals to outside agencies.
- Systems to record and monitor medical logs are ineffective and errors were identified during the inspection.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Inadequate

- The quality of teaching and learning is inadequate. This is because teachers in key stages 1 and 2 do not take sufficient account of what pupils already know and can do when planning activities. Too often, they fail to assess the quality of pupils' learning in lessons. Consequently, learning activities do not meet the needs of different groups of pupils. Pupils' books show that, over time, in English and mathematics, the most able pupils are not sufficiently stretched, while lower prior attainers and those with SEND fall further behind.
- Too few teachers deploy support staff effectively to promote pupils' learning. This limits the impact of support staff. At times, a lack of clear expectations from the teacher means that other adults contribute little to guiding pupils or addressing their misconceptions. As a result, pupils do not make the progress of which they are capable.
- Teachers' feedback to pupils is not effective in supporting them to make improvements to their work. Too few pupils are able to explain the next steps in their learning or the progress that they have made over time.
- Over time, the teaching of mathematics in key stage 2 has been weak. Leaders have recently sought to address this issue by changing teaching arrangements and arranging for an assistant headteacher from another school to conduct a programme of coaching, catch-up lessons for pupils and support for teachers. This work is rightly pitched at promoting deeper reasoning and problem solving in mathematics. However, there has not been sufficient time for this work to ensure consistency of approach across key stage 2.

- The teaching of phonics in early years and key stage 1 has improved and is a strength of the school. However, reading skills are not promoted well enough to ensure that pupils can access the key stage 2 curriculum. Consequently, pupils' progress, especially that of boys, in reading and writing across key stage 2 is less rapid than it should be.
- The teaching of science, humanities and technology is particularly poor. A lack of subject leadership and teachers' limited subject knowledge in these areas mean that many tasks are too hard or too easy. Teachers' feedback to pupils sometimes fails to correct misconceptions or wrongly rewards their incorrect answers as being correct. Too frequently, pupils are not given an opportunity to apply their writing and mathematical skills in these subjects to produce their own independent work. Consequently, pupils' subject-specific vocabulary and thinking skills are not being developed well.
- There is a programme of personal, social and health education and pupils learn about other cultures and religions in their religious education lessons. Alongside regular assemblies, extra-curricular clubs, fund-raising and the school council, these provide pupils with opportunities for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. However, the inconsistent quality of teaching across the school and lack of clear leadership of this provision mean that the quality of pupils' experiences in these areas is variable.
- Teachers and teaching assistants form positive relationships with pupils. Most pupils respect staff and appreciate opportunities to work together in pairs or small groups. For example, in a writing lesson, pupils in Year 4 cheerfully worked independently or in pairs, which left the teacher free to work with other pupils who needed extra help.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Inadequate

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is inadequate.
- Leaders cannot guarantee children's welfare because safeguarding record keeping and liaison with external agencies are ineffective. In addition, staff fail to prevent pupils' exposure to unnecessary risks. For example, poor record keeping and monitoring systems mean that pupils' medical needs are not reliably met, including as seen during the inspection. Parents informed inspectors that this had occurred on previous occasions. Over time, the medical records kept by the school are not robust or accurate enough to ascertain whether medication had been given as required.
- Pupils are aware of how to stay safe online and can provide strategies for using the internet. However, the school's poor leadership of technology limits pupils' opportunities to apply these strategies.
- Of the small sample of parents who responded to Parent View, and those parents that inspectors spoke to at the school gate, several expressed concerns that their child did not always feel supported or happy at school. Approximately one half of parents felt that communication from the school needed to be improved and they reported that they would not recommend the school to others.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is inadequate. This is because pupils' poor attendance presents a serious barrier to their learning. Overall attendance is well below average for primary schools and has been so since the school became an academy. The proportion of pupils who are persistently absent declined last year but is still approximately one and a half times the national average. The attendance of disadvantaged pupils and those with SEND is particularly low.
- Leaders and the family support worker have very recently focused on targeting improvements to persistent absence. In addition, they are working hard with families to support them in bringing their children to school regularly and on time. While there are early signs of improvement with a target cohort, it is too early to see a sustained impact from this work on reducing overall absence.
- Most pupils know how to behave and are keen to learn. However, when teaching does not meet pupils' needs, some pupils become restless and chatter about things that are unrelated to their work.
- Pupils understand that teasing, bullying and prejudice are wrong. They have an understanding and respect for the school's rules and feel that most adults will support them should they experience any incidents of unkindness. The incidence of poor behaviour and exclusions is reducing. However, some pupils and a minority of staff reported concerns about behaviour and safety.

Outcomes for pupils

Inadequate

- Pupils' attainment in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of key stage 2 was significantly below the national averages in 2018. Although pupils' overall progress was in line with pupils' progress nationally, the achievement of boys and pupils with SEND was particularly poor. These pupils' writing and mathematical skills were still well below the standard expected for their age. There is no evidence that teaching has deepened or accelerated current key stage 2 pupils' skills in these areas.
- Leaders acknowledge that more needs to be done to embed a culture and love of reading across the school. When questioned by inspectors, pupils struggled to name their favourite authors and books. While younger children tend to read well and can use a variety of strategies to self-correct, older pupils are less fluent for their age. Parents reported that reading books are not changed frequently enough and this leads to some pupils becoming bored with their reading tasks.
- Last year in key stage 1, pupils achieved in line with national averages in reading, writing and mathematics. However, disadvantaged pupils underachieved in comparison with their peers.
- The proportion of pupils in Year 1 reaching the expected standard in the phonics screening check dipped in 2018, but was still broadly in line with the national average. However, boys did not achieve as well as girls.
- Key stage 1 and key stage 2 pupils have weaknesses in their basic skills because teaching is not meeting their needs. Pupils' books demonstrate that progress in writing and mathematics is limited because pupils are not sufficiently challenged. This is

particularly the case for the most able pupils. Examples of work over time demonstrate that slow progress is being made in developing pupils' mathematical calculation skills. Similarly, expected writing skills are not yet firmly embedded, and pupils frequently make spelling, punctuation and grammatical errors.

- Across key stages 1 and 2, pupils are not stretched sufficiently by their experiences in science and across the wider curriculum. Teachers' expectations are too low. Pupils' topic books show that tasks and activities often do not reflect their different starting points. As a result, some pupils struggle to complete the work set, while the most able pupils are insufficiently challenged.
- In addition, teachers' planning and coverage of science and the foundation subjects are patchy. Teachers are not following the school's own curriculum maps published on its website. Consequently, pupils have insufficient opportunities to develop their subject-specific knowledge and skills, and their progress in these subjects is particularly poor.
- Leaders' tracking information and pupils' work demonstrate that current pupils with SEND in upper key stage 2 have made considerably less progress from their starting points than their peers, in reading, writing and mathematics.

Early years provision

Inadequate

- The early years provision is inadequate because safeguarding is ineffective across the school.
- The leadership of early years is stronger and more established than other aspects of middle leadership across the school. This has led to improvements in teaching and the learning environments. However, not all staff are sufficiently confident to use assessment to inform planning in early years. Leaders agree that some tasks set are not challenging enough for children and, as a result, over time, children do not develop the confidence to independently apply their skills as well as they should.
- Outcomes in early years require improvement. In 2017, the proportion of children achieving a good level of development was below that seen nationally. Last year, this figure increased to become broadly in line with the national average. Progress information shows that, while outcomes in some of the early learning goals are good, children do not achieve so well in areas such as understanding the world and expressive arts.
- Leaders' improvement planning is thoughtful, shows a clear understanding of priorities and has rightly targeted improving outcomes for different groups of children. However, more effective use of assessment information and specific measurable milestones are needed in these plans to support leaders in boosting the achievement of the most able children.
- The quality of support offered by teaching assistants in early years is variable. While there are examples of very strong practice, in some cases teaching assistants do not monitor effectively to allay potential risks when children transfer between different activities.
- Most children can use their understanding of phonics to read regular words and the most able children are able to read irregular ones. Teachers support children well and

involve parents to support their child's reading. As a result, children are able to sound out unfamiliar words and show a good understanding of the books they read.

- Children benefit from bright and stimulating environments that offer easily accessible, interesting activities that promote child-centred learning. The outdoor learning areas are used effectively to support a wide variety of activities, enriching all areas of children's learning.
- Nursery provides a welcoming environment where children are happy, feel secure and develop the confidence to chat to each other, staff and visitors. Staff provide activities that appeal to boys as well as girls, and a range of specialist help is available to support children who have additional needs. As a result, all children make strong progress from their starting points.
- Staff have developed effective communication with parents and offer opportunities to involve them in their children's learning. Parents feel that teachers support their children well and comment on how happy their children are at school.

School details

Unique reference number	142072
Local authority	Reading
Inspection number	10053429

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	255
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of local governing body	David Leeper
Executive headteacher	Salima Ducker
Telephone number	0118 937 5520
Website	www.ranikhetacademy.co.uk
Email address	admin@ranikhetacademy.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- Ranikhet Academy is an average-sized primary school with Nursery provision for children from three years old.
- The school is a sponsored academy within the REAch2 Academy Trust, the largest primary-only multi-academy trust in the country. The directors of REAch2 are responsible for, and oversee, the management and administration of its academies. The trust delegates aspects of governance to regional boards and local governing bodies. The local governing body also oversees two other local REAch2 academies and is responsible for taking a strategic overview of each of the schools and the monitoring of their policies, targets and priorities.
- The school serves a diverse local community with a wide range of cultural and ethnic backgrounds. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups is well above the national average.

- The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is well above the national average.
- The proportion of pupils with SEND is above average.
- The proportion of pupils who are eligible for the pupil premium is well above the national average.
- Over the past year, there have been significant staffing changes at the school and a complete restructuring of leadership. The previous head of school and teacher of Year 6 left during the last academic year. Since September 2018, the executive headteacher has increased the number of days that she spends in school and has restructured senior and middle leadership with new appointments. At the time of this inspection, the executive headteacher had taken personal responsibility for many aspects of subject leadership to allow new middle leaders to settle into their new roles.
- The school receives support from REACh2 to support teaching, learning and assessment as well as leadership and management.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors visited each of the classrooms to gather evidence to contribute to the evaluation of the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. Many of these observations were conducted jointly with senior leaders.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, subject leaders, members of the local governing body and a representative from REAch2.
- Inspectors talked to pupils about their learning, heard a small group of pupils read and looked at their work across a range of subjects. They spoke to pupils on the playground and during lessons, and the lead inspector met with a group of pupils to gather their views.
- Conversations were held with some parents at the beginning of each day of the inspection. The inspectors also considered the views expressed in 13 responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View, including eight free-text comments. They also took into account 11 responses to the staff questionnaire and three replies to the pupil survey provided by Ofsted.
- A wide range of school documentation was scrutinised, including that relating to school policies, self-evaluation, improvement planning, safeguarding, and pupils' achievement, behaviour and attendance.
- Inspectors reviewed the record of leaders' vetting and checks on the suitability of adults to work with pupils. A thorough scrutiny of leaders' safeguarding records and reporting was carried out and inspectors spoke to staff, governors and the regional director of REAch2 about safeguarding procedures in the school.

Inspection team

Matthew Newberry, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Clementina Aina	Ofsted Inspector
Susan Aspland	Ofsted Inspector

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