



Inspection report

Rufford Primary School

**Better
education
and care**

Unique Reference Number 103803
LEA Dudley

Inspection number 270414
Inspection dates 16 and 17 March 2005
Reporting inspector Mr A Watters HMI

This inspection was carried out under section 3 of the School Inspections Act 1996 and was deemed a section 10 inspection under the same Act.

Type of School	Primary	School address	Bredon Avenue
School category	Community		Stourbridge
Age range of pupils	4 to 11 years		West Midlands
			DY9 7NR
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01384 818975
Number on roll	280	Fax number	01384 818976
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mrs J Dunn
Date of previous inspection	April 2003	Headteacher	Mrs S Bloomer

Age group	Published	Reference no.
4 to 11 years	27 April 2005	270414

Introduction

When Rufford Primary School was inspected in April 2003, it was judged to require special measures because it was failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education. Her Majesty's Inspectors of Schools (HMI) subsequently visited the school on four occasions to monitor its progress, and reinspected the school in March 2005.

Description of the school

Rufford Primary School is situated in Lye and Wollescote, close to the town of Stourbridge in the West Midlands. Most of the pupils live in local council housing estates; two of these have been designated as priority neighbourhood areas and as such are receiving additional funding and support from regional and national government initiatives. The school has been part of an excellence cluster since December 2004 and has recently been recognised with the Investors in People award. There are 280 pupils on roll which includes 59 pupils in the nursery class. Forty three per cent of the pupils speak English as an additional language and 35 per cent are entitled to free school meals; both proportions are well above average. When they enter the school the pupils' attainment levels are low, particularly in literacy.

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Overall effectiveness of the school

In accordance with section 14 of the School Inspections Act 1996, I am of the opinion that the school no longer requires special measures, since it is now providing an acceptable standard of education for its pupils.

Rufford Primary School has improved considerably; it is a very good school with a strong focus on raising achievement for all pupils. It is extremely well led and managed by the headteacher, who receives very good support from the deputy headteacher and other senior teachers. Teachers and teaching assistants have high expectations for the pupils' academic attainment and their behaviour; along with all support staff they work together as a strong team and morale is high. Standards remain below the national averages but they are rising as a result of improvements in teaching, much of which is good. The pupils' behaviour and their attitudes are nearly always good and this is a strong feature of the school's provision. The curriculum meets national requirements and is amended carefully to make sure that it is matched well to the pupils' different learning needs. The school's aims are met well, particularly that to 'provide a quality teaching and learning environment, effective leadership and management and maintaining a secure environment where the whole school community feels equally valued and able to develop'.

Improvement since the last inspection

The inspection of April 2003 required the school to address key issues concerned with raising standards and improving the quality of teaching, strategic leadership and the pupils' attendance. There has been good progress in relation to improving teaching, leadership and raising standards and satisfactory progress to improve the pupils' attendance.

Capacity to improve

Strategic planning is very good and the school is well placed to improve further. The headteacher and deputy headteacher have established a rigorous focus on raising standards and improving the quality of teaching. There is a clear sense of educational direction and teamwork, with senior teachers and subject leaders making a positive contribution to improving the quality of education; the curriculum is well planned and the use of assessment information to inform the next steps in the pupils' learning is excellent. The programme for monitoring and evaluating the school's performance and tracking the pupils' progress is very good, and is an essential part of the school's leadership.

What the school should do to improve further

The school's development plan recognises the areas where improvement is needed. However the key priorities are to:

- raise standards, giving priority to English, mathematics and science;

- continue to improve the provision for teaching literacy and numeracy across the curriculum;
- improve the pupils' attendance.

Achievement and standards

The pupils make very good progress in the Foundation Stage and the majority are on course to reach the standards expected for their age, particularly in language and literacy, mathematics and their creative development. In Key Stages 1 and 2 the pupils' progress is at least satisfactory and often very good; consequently standards are rising at an increasingly rapid rate, although they are still below the levels expected for the pupils' ages. The school's results in the national tests in 2004 were below the national average overall, but in writing at Key Stage 2 were above average. Over the last two years there has been steady improvement in reading and science at Key Stage 1 and in writing and mathematics at Key Stage 2. The pupils' performance in national tests was generally satisfactory when compared with schools in a similar context, and the progress the pupils made between Key Stage 1 and 2 was good. The drive to raise standards is a central and strong feature of the school's work and underpins each of the strategies for further improvement that are identified in the school development plan.

Standards in speaking and listening have improved significantly; many pupils speak confidently about their work and articulate their ideas and opinions with clarity and conviction. Standards in writing have also improved considerably; increasing numbers of pupils in each year group, particularly the higher attaining pupils, are producing writing that is well structured, grammatically correct and punctuated accurately. Some of the pupils' writing in Years 5 and 6 is good, particularly in the use of vocabulary, complex sentences and imaginative phrases. In mathematics the pupils are becoming increasingly confident using their knowledge and understanding of number facts to solve problems; some of the pupils' achievements in Years 3 and 4 are impressive.

Personal development

The pupils' attitudes and their behaviour are very good and is a strong feature of the school's provision. In lessons the pupils work hard, try to do their best and respond very well to the clear guidance, support and challenge offered by their teachers. They enjoy coming to school, show respect for their teachers and each other and listen attentively; the quality of relationships throughout the school is very good. The pupils are unfailingly polite, courteous, eager to talk about their work and increasingly proud of their school.

Attendance is currently 93.5 per cent, and has fallen slightly from the end of September 2004, when it was 94.3 per cent; it is also below the national average for primary schools, which is 94.5 per cent. Despite the very rigorous procedures for monitoring the pupils' attendance the school recognises that it needs to continue its efforts to raise attendance levels further.

The provision for the pupils' personal development is good. Representatives from each class form and run a school council and many pupils have responded well to the increased responsibilities they have been given. Pupils co-operate well and enjoy the frequent discussions provided in lessons. They have opportunities to join a range of clubs, such as dance, drama, football and netball. The promotion of a healthy lifestyle and the principles of social and moral responsibility are given a high priority.

The overall provision for the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. They are given frequent opportunities to consider how their actions affect others and are developing a strong sense of personal responsibility. Visits in the locality, such as to the Wyre Forest Discovery Centre and Wenlock Pottery, enable the pupils to appreciate their environment, and whole-school celebrations of religious festivals, such as Eid, help the pupils understand the multicultural nature of their own community.

Quality of provision

The quality of teaching is good overall and in all but one lesson it was satisfactory or better; in just over 60 per cent of lessons the teaching was either good or very good. Some of the teaching was of a high quality. The teaching has improved significantly and all teachers are benefiting from the clear and unequivocal advice and direction provided by the school's leadership team and from attending relevant training. The use of good displays to promote effective learning is a strength of the school.

Nearly all of the lessons were well planned and organised; learning objectives were used skilfully to guide the pupils' work and linked well to the school's targets. This was a strong feature in all lessons. In the best lessons, the pupils' work was matched well to their different levels of attainment, the teachers' expectations were very high and their questions probed the pupils' understanding and challenged their thinking; consequently the pupils worked quickly and made good progress in acquiring new skills and knowledge. There was a relentless focus on raising standards and working hard; some lessons were inspiring and the teachers' enthusiasm was reflected in the pupils' enjoyment.

The procedures for assessing the pupils' attainment and tracking their progress are excellent; the information from national tests and teachers' assessments is carefully analysed and used very well to improve teaching, identify those pupils who need additional support and provide further challenge for those who are performing well. As a basis for self-evaluation it is an exemplary model.

The curriculum is broad and balanced and meets national requirements. It is well planned at all levels and is revised regularly to take account of the pupils' progress and their attainment. There is a strong and appropriate focus on teaching basic skills in literacy and numeracy, and consequently the pupils' attainment levels are rising. The Intensifying Support Project, which has been used well to set targets for improvement for all pupils and year groups, has proved a powerful tool for improvement; it is an integral part of the school's strategy for raising standards and is being implemented successfully by all teachers.

The provision for the pupils who speak English as an additional language and for those who have special educational needs is very good and is monitored well by the deputy headteacher and the special educational needs co-ordinator. The pupils receive a good level of support in lessons and their work is carefully targeted to help them improve. The quality of education in the Foundation Stage ensures the pupils receive a very good start to their school life.

The school is a welcoming community that provides a good level of care for its pupils. Day-to-day routines are well established and understood; the positive relationships that are enjoyed between adults and pupils provide a secure environment and give the pupils confidence to share their concerns and celebrate their achievements. Due regard is given to the pupils' physical development and their health and general well-being.

There are good links with the community. Developing the partnership with parents is an integral part of the school's strategic plan; for example parents and pupils in Year 2 work together for one afternoon each week as part of a very positive local community initiative. Pupils regularly take part in community events and appreciate the visits made to the school by local residents who have contributed to the pupils' understanding by talking to them about the jobs they do.

Leadership and management

The headteacher provides very good leadership and management; she ensures a relentless focus on raising standards, has developed a strong, buoyant and positive team spirit and knows her school well. She receives very good support from the deputy headteacher, who has also been instrumental in securing the school's improvement. There are very good procedures and systems for monitoring and evaluation including a rigorous programme to observe lessons and check the quality of the pupils' written work.

The headteacher and deputy headteacher are supported well by other senior staff; the role of the phase leaders and curriculum co-ordinators has improved considerably and the positive impact of their work has strengthened the overall quality of leadership and management. Senior teachers support each other well, ensuring continuity and consistency in the implementation of important initiatives. The role of the governing body has improved considerably under the astute guidance of the chair of governors; individual governors visit the school regularly and have established effective systems for measuring the school's progress.

The school's strategic plans are based on well-judged priorities and a thorough evaluation of strengths and relative weaknesses. Timescales for implementation are clear, relevant criteria have been identified to judge success, those responsible for leading and managing projects are identified, and the accountability of all teachers for securing improvement in the pupils' attainment levels is paramount.

The local education authority (LEA) has made an effective contribution to improving the quality of teaching, particularly in literacy and numeracy. The attached adviser has given good support to improve strategic planning, analyse assessment information and co-ordinate the school's involvement in the Intensifying Support Project.

Appendix – Information about the inspection

Rufford Primary School was inspected in April 2003 by two Additional Inspectors under section 3 of the School Inspections Act 1996, which gives Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Schools the authority to cause any school to be inspected. The inspection was also deemed a section 10 inspection under the same Act. The inspection was critical of many aspects of the work of the school and, in accordance with that Act, the school was made subject to special measures because it was failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education.

The school was visited by HMI in November 2003 and in March, June and October 2004 to assess the progress it was making to implement its action plan and address the key issues in the inspection report of April 2003.

In March 2005, two HMI returned to inspect the school for two days. The inspection was carried out under section 3 of the School Inspections Act 1996, and was also deemed a section 10 inspection under the same Act.

Twenty three lessons or parts of lessons and two assemblies were inspected. The pupils' conduct was observed around the school and on the playground at break and lunchtimes, and samples of their work were inspected. Discussions were held with the headteacher, the deputy headteacher, senior teachers, the chair of governors, a representative from the LEA and informally with other staff. A wide range of the school's documentation was scrutinised. Account was taken of the evidence from previous monitoring inspections.

The inspection assessed the quality of education provided and the progress the school has made, in particular in relation to the main findings and key issues in the inspection report of April 2003 and the action plan prepared by the governing body to address those key issues.

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