



Rowley Hall Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 103955
LEA Sandwell
Inspection number 277033
Inspection dates 14 September 2005 to 15 September 2005
Reporting inspector Linda Rockey HMI

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Windsor Road
School category	Community		Rowley Regis
Age range of pupils	3 to 11		West Midlands B65 9HU
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	0121 5591400
Number on roll	450	Fax number	0121 5591400
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mr R Downing
Date of previous inspection	9 October 2000	Headteacher	Mrs Lynda Townsend

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three of Her Majesty's Inspectors of Schools.

Description of the school

Rowley Hall is a large primary school in Rowley Regis. About nine per cent of the children are from minority ethnic groups but only two children are at the early stages of learning English as an additional language. The proportion of children claiming free school meals is about average. Children start in the nursery with low standards particularly in speaking and listening. Across the school more children than is usual have learning difficulties and disabilities. The school has a stable staff and the turnover of children each year is low. Rowley Hall has been in an Education Action Zone for the past three years. It has been recently re-awarded the Basic Skills Quality Mark and Investors in People standard. In 2005, the school gained a Leading Parent Partnership award.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 4

The school has a number of strengths but overall its effectiveness is not as good as it should be. Children in the Foundation Stage make good progress but standards in Years 1 to 6 are too low, especially in mathematics, and children are not doing well enough. In accordance with section 13 (3) of the Education Act 2005, HMCI is of the opinion that this school requires significant improvement, because it is performing significantly less well than in all circumstances it could reasonably be expected to perform. The school is therefore given a Notice to Improve. Significant improvement is required in relation to standards and achievement, especially in mathematics.

The quality of teaching and learning and the curriculum are satisfactory. Action taken to raise standards in English is proving successful but more needs to be done in mathematics and in the use of interactive whiteboards to help children with their learning. Children enjoy school, have good attitudes to learning and behave well. All children make good progress in their personal, social and emotional development. Adults provide a high level of care and support for children in a calm, safe and purposeful atmosphere. There are strong links with parents and the school has recently won an award for working effectively in partnership with them.

Leadership and management of the school are satisfactory. Key leaders know the school's priorities but judge its effectiveness to be better than it is. Although there is a strong staff team, the full benefit of shared leadership is yet to be seen. The school has made improvements in the five years since the last inspection and provides sound value for money. It has the capacity to improve further.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards, particularly in mathematics
- Improve the quality of teaching and learning
- Ensure subject leaders contribute more to raising standards and to sharing good practice
- Make better use of interactive whiteboards to support children's learning.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 4

Overall, standards and achievement are inadequate. The school recognises this and realises improvements are required in English and mathematics in Years 1 to 6. There has been recent improvement in reading but standards in mathematics are much too low. Although boys' results were better in 2005, boys still do less well than girls in reading, writing and mathematics in Year 2 and in writing in Year 6.

When children first start in the nursery and reception classes, their skills are weaker than is typical for children of this age. They make good progress and by the time they enter Year 1, most reach the levels expected across all areas of learning. This is the result of good teaching. In Years 1 and 2, most children make satisfactory progress in

reading and the improvement in writing and mathematics test results in 2005 indicates improved progress for some children. In Years 3 to 6, children continue to make satisfactory progress in reading but they achieve less well in writing. Progress in mathematics is inadequate. Most children with additional learning needs make satisfactory progress and some individual children seen in lessons were making good progress as a result of effective, targeted support. The school knows that there is much to do to raise standards if Year 6 children are to meet the challenging targets set for 2006 and 2007. More emphasis is required on improving standards in mathematics, in particular, by tackling weaknesses in children's mental calculation and problem solving skills.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

The school rightly judges this to be a strength. Children's personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is good. Children enjoy coming to school. The school's "you can do it" programme builds their confidence and self-esteem. They have good attitudes and behave well in lessons and around the school. Relationships are positive, reflecting the children's good social development. There is little bullying or harassment of any kind. Children speak favourably about improvements in their learning environment and say that they feel safe and secure.

Children make a good contribution to the school and wider community. The school council is very active and meets regularly to make suggestions about developments and to highlight health and safety issues. Representatives attend governing body meetings to talk about their work. They also help to raise funds for local and international charities, such as the children of Chernobyl. Older children act as school buddies and help organise the "huff and puff" club which promotes active play at lunchtime. A landscaping project organised by a local secondary school gives Year 5 children an opportunity to make a positive contribution and have a say in the development of the school.

Children have good knowledge about healthy lifestyles. Fresh fruit is available for all children each day and classes take regular water breaks. The school runs a number of after school clubs and is involved in a local partnership which promotes participation in sports activities.

Attendance is satisfactory and improving. Most children arrive at school on time. The views of parents and children are reviewed regularly and responses are acted upon. The work of the learning mentor is having a positive influence on children's personal development and on parents' involvement in supporting their children's learning.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Some teaching is good but too much of it is satisfactory. In the best lessons, activities are planned carefully to match the children's needs and they make good progress as a result. This was seen in the Foundation Stage where staff are very clear about the next step in learning for individual children. Where teaching is good, it is stimulating, fast moving and engages the children's interest to develop their learning. Attractive and stimulating displays provide visual support and help children to learn and use key vocabulary. Questions are used effectively to assess the children's understanding and develop their thinking skills. Learning support assistants are used well to work with identified children. There are good relationships between children and teachers and behaviour is consistently well managed.

In some lessons, however, there is too much teacher talk in overlong introductions and, therefore, too little time is left for children to work independently. As a result, some children, particularly boys, occasionally lose concentration and switch off. In mathematics lessons, teachers do not spend enough time sharpening children's mental calculation skills. The recently installed interactive whiteboards are not always used effectively to support children's learning. In order to raise standards the school will need to improve the quality of teaching by building on, and sharing, the good practice that already exists. Assessment is satisfactory. It is good when children have a clear sense of how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve. However, too many children are not reaching sufficiently challenging targets in their learning.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The school has worked successfully on improving literacy skills, particularly reading. However, the school recognises that there is more to be done to raise standards in mathematics. Improvements are also needed in developing literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology skills across the curriculum. The school is developing a thematic curriculum; for example Year 4 children were developing their literacy skills through work in history on the Anglo Saxons. The effective use of artefacts and role play meet the school's aim of bringing the curriculum alive. An enterprise project with a local secondary school is giving children an insight into the world of work and contributes effectively to children's economic understanding. The children have the opportunity to design a project where they have to take risks and make economic decisions. A wide range of sporting opportunities is offered at lunchtime and after school but the choice of other extra curricular activities is limited.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Care, guidance and support are satisfactory. Inspectors agree with the school's self-evaluation that there are many strengths in pastoral care. But inspectors judge that children do not receive the academic guidance and support they need and, therefore, do not achieve as well as they should. Nevertheless, the ethos of the school ensures that children can learn and play in a safe and secure environment. Arrangements for child protection are all in place. Racist incidents and bullying are rare. Children say that they are dealt with firmly and effectively.

Support for those children who have learning difficulties and disabilities ensures their needs are met satisfactorily. However, recording their progress against National Curriculum levels is at an early stage of development. The work of the learning mentor is outstanding and has a very positive effect on children's behaviour and attitudes as well as providing valuable support for teachers. There have been no exclusions in the past two years. The learning mentor's evaluation of her contribution is very good. Her record keeping demonstrates the effect her work is having on children's personal and academic development.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The headteacher has a clear understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. She is committed to raising standards and to children's personal development and well-being. She has successfully created a collective sense of purpose and built an effective team. Relationships are good and there is a strong sense of commitment to meeting the needs of individual children. The school runs smoothly and is an attractive, orderly and welcoming place.

Leadership responsibility is shared among key members of staff but more effective leadership of subjects is required to raise standards. With the support of external consultants, the school has had some success in identifying weaknesses and raising standards, particularly in reading. The leadership team monitors and evaluates the work of the school adequately and produces a considerable quantity of information on children's performance. However, the leadership team does not yet make sufficient use of the information it gathers to raise standards. Self-evaluation processes are rigorous; for example, in a lesson jointly observed, the judgement of the headteacher was the same as that of the inspector.

This is an inclusive school that successfully promotes a strong sense of community. The parents speak very highly of its work and good account is taken of their views. Governors are very supportive and are actively involved in the life of the school. They are well informed about the areas for development but could challenge the school more to raise standards. Rowley Hall has a sound track record of improvements including the upgrading of accommodation and resources. The inspectors agree with

the school that the leadership and management have the capacity to improve the school further.

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Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	School Overall	16-19
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	4	NA
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	3	NA
The quality and standards in foundation stage	2	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3	NA
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	Yes	NA
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	NA

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	4	NA
The standards ¹ reached by learners	4	NA
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	4	NA
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	3	NA

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2	NA
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2	NA
The behaviour of learners	2	NA
The attendance of learners	3	NA
How well learners enjoy their education	2	NA
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	NA
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2	NA
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2	NA
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3	NA

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	3	NA
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3	NA
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	3	NA

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	3	NA
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3	NA
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	3	NA
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3	NA
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	3	NA
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3	NA
The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected	Yes	NA

The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy	
Learners are encouraged and enabled to eat and drink healthily	Yes
Learners are encouraged and enabled to take regular exercise	Yes
Learners are discouraged from smoking and substance abuse	Yes
Learners are educated about sexual health	Yes
The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe	
Procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements	Yes
Risk assessment procedures and related staff training are in place	Yes
Action is taken to reduce anti-social behaviour, such as bullying and racism	Yes
Learners are taught about key risks and how to deal with them	Yes
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution	
Learners are helped to develop stable, positive relationships	Yes
Learners, individually and collectively, participate in making decisions that affect them	Yes
Learners are encouraged to initiate, participate in and manage activities in school and the wider community	Yes
The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being	
There is provision to promote learners' basic skills	Yes
Learners have opportunities to develop enterprise skills and work in teams	Yes
Careers education and guidance is provided to all learners in key stage 3 and 4 and the sixth form	NA
Education for all learners aged 14–19 provides an understanding of employment and the economy	NA

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Rowley Hall Primary School Windsor Road Rowley Regis West Midlands B65 9HU September 2005

Dear Children

Thank you for looking after us when we visited your school. We thought you were very polite and helpful.

You are working very hard to improve your reading and writing but you need to concentrate more on your numeracy. We have urged your teachers to expect more from you. In numeracy lessons, you need to work faster in the oral starter and improve your problem solving skills. We have recommended that teachers make more use of the interactive whiteboards in lessons and give you more time to explain your thinking and work independently.

We enjoyed talking to you about all the things you do at Rowley Hall. There are lots of good things going on. We were impressed by your behaviour and the way you care for one another. Playtimes look fun. 'Huff and Puff' activities are good and help you to play together. We noticed that there were always buddies ready to help children who needed a friend.

Funky Monkey was visiting the children in the blue box when we were there. The children in reception were good at helping him to recognise different sounds and letters. Meeting the school council was one of the highlights of our visit. We think your councillors are very good at getting things done! You are lucky to have such a wonderful Enterprise Centre and a technician to sort out any problems with the technology. We enjoyed looking at the colourful displays around the school and we learned a lot about you from them. Your fundraising for children in Chernobyl was impressive.

You have some very challenging targets in 2006 and we wish you well. Remember **YOU CAN DO IT!**

With best wishes

Linda Rockey HMI