



# Roger de Clare First School and Nursery

Inspection Report

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**Unique Reference Number** 117406  
**Local Authority** HERTFORDSHIRE  
**Inspection number** 290822  
**Inspection date** 21 February 2007  
**Reporting inspector** Philip Mann HMI

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	First	<b>School address</b>	Station Road
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary controlled		Puckeridge
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4-9		Ware SG11 1TF
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed	<b>Telephone number</b>	01920 821363
<b>Number on roll (school)</b>	284	<b>Fax number</b>	01920 823566
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body	<b>Chair</b>	Mrs Wendy Smith
		<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs Sue Rousell
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	21 January 2002		

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors over one day.

## Description of the school

Roger de Clare School is above average in size for its type. It is a voluntary controlled Church of England school located in the village of Puckeridge near Ware. The children's starting points in the nursery are generally in line with national expectations overall but low in communication, language and literacy skills. The proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals is broadly average and an average proportion of pupils have learning difficulties. There are currently six pupils with a statement of special educational need. The vast majority of pupils are White British and the proportion of pupils whose first language is not English is very small.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 1

This is an excellent school with many outstanding features. The attention paid to pupils' individual needs is impressive and this promotes outstanding achievement in both their academic and personal development. The headteacher provides excellent leadership for both staff and pupils. Expectations are very high. Teamwork is positively encouraged and is a significant strength of the school. The vast majority of parents are overwhelmingly positive about the school. One commented, 'The children are very happy and eager to go to school every morning and upset if they can't!' Another said, 'This is a wonderful school that really wants and expects the best from its pupils.'

The quality of overall provision is outstanding. Teaching of the highest quality throughout the school ensures that all pupils, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities achieve very well in both their academic and personal development. As a result, many pupils succeed in attaining very high standards in English, mathematics and science by the end of Year 4. Provision in the nursery and reception classes is outstanding, providing these children with an excellent start in their education. A rich and vibrant curriculum is planned for older pupils that fully develops their basic skills in literacy and numeracy whilst providing a wealth of experiences in the creative arts. The quality and standard of pupils' artwork is particularly noteworthy. Information and communication technology (ICT) is being used well to support teaching and learning. However, sometimes opportunities are missed in lessons to fully utilise the potential of computers to develop pupils' learning further.

The school has fully embraced the concept of inclusion. All staff provide outstanding levels of care, guidance and support for all within a caring Christian community. Everyone is valued as an individual and their progress is monitored and recorded in great detail. Relationships between staff and pupils and pupils themselves are very positive. Consequently, the pupils' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is outstanding. The pupils behave very well and attendance is good. All are developing very positive attitudes towards learning and living a healthy lifestyle.

Planning for school improvement is extremely thorough and based on very effective monitoring and self-evaluation. A genuine commitment to review, evaluate and develop provision means that there is always a constant drive for further improvement. Seeking the views of pupils, staff and parents is an integral part of this process. Most parents are very supportive of the school's work and value the opportunity to make comments and suggestions about its development. However, a small number feel that consultation is not always a two way process and this is something the school is working at.

Governance of the school is excellent. Governors play a vital role in working closely with staff to achieve the very best for the pupils. Taking all factors into account the school provides excellent value for money.

## **What the school should do to improve further**

- Make better use of computers in lessons to support pupils' learning and achievements.
- Build on existing good practice to develop even more effective methods of consultation with parents.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 1**

Achievement and standards are outstanding because of the excellent teaching, curriculum and care that the school provides for all. The attainment of children when they enter the Nursery is broadly similar to that expected nationally, except in early literacy skills where it is lower. These children make very good progress in the Foundation Stage to achieve standards that are similar to those expected in literacy skills but higher in some other areas when they start in Year 1. Good or better teaching and a strong focus on the basic skills of literacy and numeracy ensures that this progress is maintained and built upon further. As a result, standards overall are well above average in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of Year 2. This is confirmed by the 2006 teacher assessments. However, analysis of this data reveals that girls achieved far better than boys at this age. This trend has been identified by the school and is now being reversed through a range of effective strategies to motivate and inspire boys. Older pupils in Years 3 and 4 continue to build on these foundations to attain standards that are much higher than that expected of nine year olds. This is especially so in English where pupils' writing is of a very high standard and they write with confidence and expression.

Focused support and carefully planned programmes of work contribute significantly to the excellent progress of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Analysis of data indicates that pupils whose home language is not English make equally good progress.

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 1**

Personal development and well-being are outstanding. All pupils display very positive attitudes towards their work and towards the staff who help them to learn. Relationships are very positive in this happy school where all pupils are valued as individuals. Behaviour in both lessons and around the school is excellent. Pupils state that they love coming to school because all the teachers make learning interesting and fun. As a result, attendance is good. Pupils respond particularly well to the remarkable opportunities planned for their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. For example, many spontaneously burst into song to accompany the music played at the start of an assembly. Pupils feel safe and secure. They state that there is an absence of any bullying and that they feel confident that if any did occur, it would be quickly resolved by staff. A strong feature is how pupils cooperate with

each other in their learning, for example, solving problems in mathematics or composing a simple tune in music. Citizenship skills are developed very effectively through participation in the activities of the school council. This enables all pupils to make an excellent contribution to their school community.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 1**

Inspection evidence and the school's own self-evaluation confirms that teaching and learning are outstanding. There is a strong feeling of all staff working together as a tightly knit team to maximise the quality of what goes on in the classrooms. Planning is of a consistently high standard across the school with tasks effectively matched to different ability groups. Pupils of higher ability state that they find work challenging. In the very best lessons, teachers demonstrate very high expectations of what pupils can achieve. Activities move along at a brisk pace but ample guidance and praise is provided to help those who need extra support and guidance. As a result, all pupils persevere to produce work of a very high quality. Assessment of pupils' work is a real strength of the school. Teachers' marking is very detailed, provides useful guidance for pupils and sets new targets for them to achieve. Consequently, pupils know their targets well and endeavour to implement them in their work. A wide range of resources are used well in lessons. Interactive whiteboards support teaching well. However, opportunities are sometimes missed to use other computers in the classrooms to support pupils' learning.

### **Curriculum and other activities**

#### **Grade: 1**

The curriculum is outstanding because it provides pupils with excellent opportunities to develop their literacy and numeracy skills alongside the creative and physical aspects of their learning. There is a strong commitment to pupils' enjoyment and well-being, and preparation for the next stages in learning, citizenship and preparation for their future lives. Effective links are established between subjects to make learning interesting and fun. The scene is set within the Foundation Stage where provision is very good. Personal and social skills are developed very well through small group work in these classes and built on throughout the school. Art and music are particularly strong elements of work planned for pupils, with many examples of high quality artwork on display around the school. Personal, social and health education is given a high profile and this makes an excellent contribution to pupils' safe and healthy lifestyles. There is very good provision for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, those whose home language is not English and pupils with specific talents and gifts. A wide range of extra activities, including French and a residential trip, provides further levels of enrichment.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 1**

Care, guidance and support are outstanding and contribute strongly to pupils' progress, enjoyment and well-being. Very careful attention is paid to health and safety issues and child protection. Procedures for vetting staff are robust. Academic progress and personal development are monitored very well and are a significant strength. Pupils value the guidance they are provided with by teachers' marking and the individual and class targets set for them. Induction procedures for children starting in the Nursery are excellent and parents of pupils who join the school part-way through the school are particularly pleased with how their child settles into the new routines.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 1**

Leadership and management are outstanding. This is because the headteacher provides very clear direction for the school's work and governance of the school is excellent. Teamwork is actively encouraged to implement school improvement. Responsibilities are delegated very effectively and subject leadership is outstanding. The professional development of all staff is given a high priority. Performance management is robust and successfully linked to improving the academic success of the pupils.

The school's procedures for self-evaluation are very strong, and take account of the views of pupils, staff, governors and parents alike. Most parents are very supportive of the school's work and value the opportunity to make comments and suggestions about its development. In contrast, a small number feel that consultation is not always as open as it could be. However, these concerns have been correctly identified within the comprehensive school development plan. Several strategies to improve dialogue between school and parents are about to be implemented.

Governors are very involved in all aspects of school life. They monitor its work very effectively and contribute significantly to school improvement. Much has been achieved since the previous inspection and the school is very well placed to improve further.

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## Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	<b>School Overall</b>
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### Overall effectiveness

<b>How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?</b>	1
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

### Achievement and standards

<b>How well do learners achieve?</b>	1
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	1
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	1
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	1

### Personal development and well-being

<b>How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The behaviour of learners	1
The attendance of learners	2
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1

### The quality of provision

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?</b>	1
<b>How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?</b>	1
<b>How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?</b>	1

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

## Leadership and management

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

## **Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

22 February 2007

Dear Pupils

Roger de Clare First School and Nursery, Station Road, Puckeridge, Ware, SG11 1TF

I really enjoyed visiting your school and I would like to thank you all for making me so welcome during the day.

It is very clear to me that you all love being at school. Many of you told me that this is because the staff provide many exciting activities for you to do. I agree with you because during my visit I saw many excellent things going on in lessons. In fact, the school is outstanding. This is because your headteacher really encourages everybody to do their best and manages the school in an outstanding way. There is such a happy atmosphere around the school and it is a pleasure to see you all playing and working together as one big team. Your behaviour is excellent.

Lessons are taught very well. The teachers use the computerised whiteboards to make lessons interesting for you but sometimes you do not always get a chance to do work on the computers in your classroom. All staff look after your needs really well. The teachers mark your work very carefully, set targets for you to work at and record the progress that you make in great detail. What is so good to see is the way that you get stuck into your work and how neat your writing is. Many of your parents also believe this to be a wonderful school and they really appreciate what the staff do for you all. However, a small number of mums and dads feel that their views are not always listened to. I feel that your head teacher and the governors do seek the views of all parents but this is something that they are going to try and do even better.

Once again, thank you for making me feel so welcome and good luck for the future.

Yours sincerely,

Philip Mann

HMI