

Rickleton Primary School

Inspection report

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| Unique Reference Number | 108818 |
| Local Authority | Sunderland |
| Inspection number | 301698 |
| Inspection date | 7 June 2007 |
| Reporting inspector | Geoffrey Yates |

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

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| Type of school | Primary |
| School category | Community |
| Age range of pupils | 3–11 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number on roll | |
| School | 409 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair | Mrs Ruth Forster |
| Headteacher | Mrs Christine Curtis |
| Date of previous school inspection | Not previously inspected |
| School address | Vigo Lane Washington Tyne and Wear NE38 9EZ |
| Telephone number | 0191 2193785 |
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|--------------------------|-------------|
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

This school is larger than average and has its own Nursery. The school population is predominantly White British, but a small number of pupils are from a minority ethnic group and are learning to speak English as an additional language. Few pupils are entitled to free school meals. The percentage of children that have learning difficulties and/or disabilities is broadly average. When children start school there is a wide range of attainment which, overall, is below what is typical for their ages. Since the previous inspection, the closure of a local school has meant the school's catchment area has changed with a greater influx of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a good school which provides its pupils with a good education. There are outstanding features of the school's work with regard to pupils' personal development, the care it provides and in the range of extra-curricular opportunities the school offers. Pupils enjoy school because the curriculum extends beyond what is normally provided. For example, pupils have the opportunity to work with an artist in residence or to develop their dance skills; this encourages pupils' positive attitudes. One child commented, 'This school gives you lots of opportunities to try new things.' Behaviour is good overall and pupils are very polite and keen to learn. In recent years, there has been an increase in the number of pupils displaying immature attitudes and the school has developed good strategies, including the use of 'nurture groups' to help these pupils behave well. Most parents are happy with all the school provides. One parent summed up the views of the majority by saying, 'My child has progressed well and has become a very responsible and well rounded individual'. A small number of parents expressed concern about their children being bullied but no incidents of bullying were seen during the inspection and the school's anti-bullying procedures were found to be effective. Pupils have an excellent awareness of the importance of healthy eating; they are keen to keep fit and enjoy taking part in competitive sport. Pupils take their responsibilities in school seriously. They are keen to share their skills in the wider community; for example, by having a big say in the planning of a community play area, taking part in music festivals and raising funds for charities. Pupils grow in confidence and independence and these qualities, combined with their well-developed academic skills, ensure that they are extremely well prepared for the future.

Pupils achieve well because teaching is good and results in above average standards in English, mathematics and science by the time they leave. Provision in the Foundation Stage is good. Children make the best start because of the strong focus on promoting personal development and basic literacy and numeracy skills within well-planned activities. However, the lack of a designated, well-resourced outside area for Reception children places some restrictions on the range of pupils' learning. From a below average starting point, children make good progress and reach the learning goals expected at the end of Reception. Pupils continue to make good progress throughout the rest of the school and standards are above average at the end of Year 6. A key to the school's success is that teachers use assessment information successfully to group pupils in year groups across classes according to their prior attainment. Teachers work well with support staff and use questioning very well in lessons. However, when pupils' work is marked, opportunities are sometimes missed to provide pupils with written comments to show them how they might improve further.

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher has a clear vision for the school and successfully maintains a balance between promoting pupils' academic progress and their personal development. Governors are supportive and well informed. Subject leaders manage their subjects well and are fully involved in evaluating the school's strengths and areas for development. The school provides good value for money.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that marking is used consistently well to inform pupils clearly of what they need to do to improve their work.
- Improve the outside resources for pupils in the Reception class.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils achieve well and overall standards by the time pupils leave are above average. Children start school in the Nursery with levels of attainment below those typical for their ages. They make good progress in the Foundation Stage, particularly in developing language and in their personal, social and emotional development. Children achieve the expected early learning goals by the time they start Year 1. Teachers' assessments at the end of Key Stage 1 show that standards, although broadly average, are not as high as in previous years. This was caused by the change in the nature of the school's intake following the closure of a local school, with a higher proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities entering the school. The reorganisation of teaching groups so that pupils are taught English and mathematics in groups based on prior attainment is resulting in an improved pattern of progress. Pupils make good progress in Key Stage 2 and reach above average standards by the end of Year 6 in English, mathematics and science. There are no major gender differences. In 2006, challenging targets were narrowly missed in English but met in mathematics and science. Pupils' achievement is good because the school regularly tracks progress and makes effective provision to support those they find are not doing as well as they should. Pupils learning English as an additional language do well, and most reach or exceed the expected standards at Year 2 and Year 6. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are well supported and make good progress.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils' personal development and well-being are outstanding. The school provides an environment where pupils feel valued. For example, members of the school's dance team rightly feel proud when they perform in front of the whole school. Pupils are very polite, helpful and say how much they enjoy school. Attendance is satisfactory. The vast majority of pupils attend regularly but the few who take holidays in school time affect the overall attendance level. The quality of spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. The school's focus on anti-bullying issues has ensured that pupils have a very good awareness of the issues involved. Pupils have a voice, not only through the school council but also through class councils. School council members display very good initiative and responsibility, saying they are proud to represent their school. Their decisions not only have an impact on school life but also on the local community, as demonstrated by their active involvement in planning a new community play area. Pupils have an outstanding understanding of the importance of a healthy lifestyle. This is because of the importance given to this aspect by the school through curricular developments in personal and social development and physical education as well as extra-curricular activities. Behaviour is good overall. A small number of pupils misbehave but their needs are addressed well by the additional support programmes put in place by the school. Pupils make a good contribution to the community by raising money for charities and making links with agencies such as the fire service. By the end of Year 6, pupils have acquired the basic skills and qualities that will equip them very well for their future life.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are good, enabling pupils to make good progress. In lessons, teachers make good use of teaching assistants to support individuals or groups of pupils. The teaching of pupils in groups based on prior attainment is effective because work is matched closely to pupils' ability. Key strengths in teaching include good use of questioning and very good relationships with the pupils. It is very clear that teachers place learning firmly at the centre of activities and encourage thinking skills which enable pupils to reflect upon and talk about their learning. This is especially so in Year 6. For example, pupils are keen to talk about their targets and the steps they have taken to meet them. Good opportunities are provided for pupils to use their writing and numeracy skills in other subjects. In the Foundation Stage, pupils develop their skills well because of high quality teaching within an exciting and stimulating classroom environment that encompasses all areas of learning. Good use is made of assessment information in the Foundation Stage to ensure that children of all attainment levels make good progress. This good use of assessment information continues throughout the rest of the school, ensuring pupils achieve well. However, when teachers mark pupils' work, opportunities are missed to provide written comments on how they might improve further.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum provides a good range of interesting experiences. This supports pupils' academic and personal achievement very well. The curriculum is adapted suitably to integrate different subjects and meets pupils' needs well. The Foundation Stage curriculum is good. However, the lack of a well-resourced outside area places limits on pupils' learning experiences in the Reception class. The school offers older pupils an outstanding range and variety of activities planned to enhance the curriculum. These include working with an artist in residence, having the opportunity to learn to play a wide variety of musical instruments and working with a visiting specialist sports coach. Pupils particularly enjoy extra-curricular activities such as dance and football. The school has won many awards including sporting awards, the healthy school's award and the information and communication technology (ICT) and ArtsMark awards, showing its commitment to a varied and rich curriculum.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Care, guidance and support are outstanding. The ethos of the school is focused on safeguarding pupils and enabling them to achieve as well as they can. All essential safety procedures are in place. Thorough checks are conducted to see that all working in school are suitable to be involved with children. Close links with external agencies enable staff to offer well-informed guidance, especially to pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The school's very good assessment systems have been used effectively to track pupils' progress. This has been most successful in tackling the wide range of abilities created by the changing intake. Pupils' progress is monitored closely and support provided where it is most needed. Concern from a small number of parents about children being bullied has prompted the school to ensure anti-bullying procedures are understood by pupils. Good procedures are in place to

ensure pupils know what to do if they have concerns, including access to a 'drop in session' held weekly where their concerns will be listened to.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The school is well led and managed. The headteacher, ably supported by her senior colleagues, sets a clear and positive direction for the work of the school. She has led the school positively through a challenging period following the influx of pupils from a closing school, some of whom had immature attitudes to school. The ethos within school has a sharp focus on improving pupils' learning, progress and standards. This is set alongside a firm commitment to ensure a high level of personal development for all pupils. The school consults with both pupils and parents about all aspects of school life. There are good monitoring and evaluation procedures in use, as demonstrated by the school's accurate self-evaluation. There has been good improvement since the previous inspection. Attainment has remained above average despite the changing nature of the intake and high standards have been sustained by the time pupils leave. Governance is good. Governors ask the right questions to hold the school to account for its performance and check regularly for themselves how well it is doing. Monitoring and evaluation are increasingly thorough and rigorous. Any dips in performance are identified and action taken to remedy them. This is a school where there is no complacency and the school has a good capacity to continue to improve.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

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

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

Achievement and standards

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| How well do learners achieve? | 2 |
| The standards ¹ reached by learners | 2 |
| How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners | 2 |
| How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress | 2 |

Personal development and well-being

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|---|---|
| How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners? | 1 |
| The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development | 1 |
| The behaviour of learners | 2 |
| The attendance of learners | 3 |
| 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

| | |
|---|---|
| How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs? | 2 |
| How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners? | 2 |
| How well are learners cared for, guided and supported? | 1 |

¹ 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.

Annex A

Leadership and management

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| How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners? | 2 |
| How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education | 2 |
| How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets | 2 |
| How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can | 2 |
| How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money | 2 |
| The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities | 2 |
| 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

9 June 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Rickleton Primary School, Tyne and Wear, NE38 9EZ

Thank you for the very friendly welcome you gave me when I visited your school recently. I really enjoyed my time with you and seeing some of you in lessons, even if it was only for a short time. I was very impressed to see the pupils perform their dance during assembly.

I am pleased to tell you that your school is a good one and has outstanding strengths in your personal development and in the care and extra activities it provides. You do well in lessons and in tests because you work hard and understand the importance of this for the future. I agree with you that your teachers and other adults make lessons interesting and that if you need help you get it. I like the way that the teachers ask questions that really make you think. Teachers put a great deal of time and effort into marking the work you do but I would like them to provide more written comments to help you improve further. If this happens the important thing is that you carry out the teachers' suggestions and then your work will be even better.

Your behaviour is good and I was very impressed with how polite you were. You were all active at lunchtime and you benefit from many after school clubs. You told me that you feel safe in school and that, if problems occur, an adult will sort it out when you tell them about it. The school council is busy on your behalf and members enjoy being able to take new things forward to make life better for you. I was very pleased to see the exciting opportunities children are given to learn in the Reception class. This could be even better if there was an outside area, just for the Reception classes, which has lots of resources.

Keep on working hard and, as a result, you can continue to play a major part in ensuring that your school continues to be highly regarded.

Yours sincerely

Geoffrey Yates

Lead inspector