

# Rectory Farm Primary School

## Inspection report

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|--------------------------------|---------------------|
| <b>Unique Reference Number</b> | 121940              |
| <b>Local Authority</b>         | Northamptonshire    |
| <b>Inspection number</b>       | 314157              |
| <b>Inspection dates</b>        | 12–13 November 2007 |
| <b>Reporting inspector</b>     | Stephen Lake        |

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>                     | Primary                                     |
| <b>School category</b>                    | Community                                   |
| <b>Age range of pupils</b>                | 4–11                                        |
| <b>Gender of pupils</b>                   | Mixed                                       |
| <b>Number on roll</b>                     |                                             |
| School                                    | 201                                         |
| <b>Appropriate authority</b>              | The governing body                          |
| <b>Chair</b>                              | Hannah Jefferies                            |
| <b>Headteacher</b>                        | Michael Snelson                             |
| <b>Date of previous school inspection</b> | 9 November 2006                             |
| <b>School address</b>                     | Rectory Farm Road<br>Northampton<br>NN3 5DD |
| <b>Telephone number</b>                   | 01604 411820                                |
| <b>Fax number</b>                         | 01604 414748                                |

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|--------------------------|---------------------|
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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

## Description of the school

The school has been through a period of considerable disruption over the last year due to a Private Finance Initiative (PFI) building programme. A significant number of pupils experience social and economic disadvantage. Children entering the school in the Reception Year have lower than expected skills, especially in language and communication. The profile of children entering the school is changing. Fewer have pre-school experience than previously, and the proportion of children with English as an additional language has risen, although this remains broadly average. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities is broadly average. The school holds the Healthy School award and is seeking recognition as a centre for sport and physical education. When the school was inspected in November 2006, it was given a Notice to Improve in relation to standards and achievement by the time pupils leave in Year 6.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 3

The school has improved a great deal recently and is now providing a satisfactory standard of education. In accordance with Section 13 (4) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school no longer requires significant improvement.

Children start school with low skills and make good progress in the Foundation Stage because of good quality teaching. They begin Year 1 well prepared for later learning and with skills in line with those expected. Progress through Years 1 and 2 is satisfactory and pupils attain average standards in these year groups. Recent strategies put in place to improve the quality of teaching in Years 3 to 6 are starting to prove effective in raising achievement in these year groups. However, standards overall remain exceptionally low by the end of Year 6, despite the significant improvement taking place. This is due to the impact of several years of very low attainment and inadequate progress. Pupils' achievement is now satisfactory but there is some variation in how well pupils are doing in different subjects. The recent improvement is most evident in English where standards have risen and are now broadly average. Standards in mathematics remain very low, although the improvement noted last year is continuing.

The high emphasis on raising pupils' self-esteem is seen in the bright and interesting environment that celebrates pupils' achievements. Not surprisingly, pupils' personal development is good and a direct result of the good care and attention given to individual pupils. Parents appreciate the support given to their children. Several made comments such as, 'My child is making good progress because teachers are good at helping the quieter child become more confident.' Behaviour is satisfactory, attendance has improved over the past year and pupils are keen to learn. They make a good contribution to the school community and say that they enjoy school a great deal. This is particularly impressive given the great disruption that the school has been through during the last twelve months while the building programme has been taking place.

Recent appointments have strengthened the teaching team. Teaching is now more consistent in Years 3 to 6 with many good lessons, especially in English. Teachers are making better use of information on how well pupils are doing to plan work and set targets that challenge more of the pupils to do their best. However, these strategies are more firmly established in English than in mathematics. The school looks after the pupils well and ensures that they know how to stay safe and lead a healthy lifestyle. Pupils appreciate this and say that they feel safe and can always get help from the adults. Older pupils say that they like the targets for improvement that teachers are able to set now that they have better information on how well individuals are doing.

The senior management team has a sound understanding of the strengths and areas for development within the school. Regular monitoring of the impact of recent strategies to improve reading and writing by the senior management coupled with strong subject leadership and good support from local authority consultants are major reasons why English has improved. Changes to the curriculum allow a greater emphasis on English and support for teachers ensures that teachers are clear about what to teach in this subject. New arrangements for leading mathematics are starting to provide similar support and guidance to teachers. Nevertheless, leaders at all levels are not involved enough in monitoring and evaluating all aspects of the school's work as part of a cohesive team. The information on how well pupils are doing is not used well enough to provide a good strategic overview of how well the school or whole year

groups are performing. Governance is good and governors support the school well. The good management of the Foundation Stage ensures that children get off to a good start. The significant improvements that have taken place in provision for other year groups since the previous inspection show that the school has a satisfactory capacity to improve further.

## **Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage**

### **Grade: 2**

Children starting school benefit from a rich and stimulating environment that sets the tone for the experiences they receive. Good teamwork between teacher and teaching assistants ensures that children get a very good start. Great attention to children's personal development develops their social skills and prepares them well for learning. Detailed and rigorous assessment of children ensures that activities are matched well to the needs of individuals. Children with learning difficulties, or English as an additional language (EAL), are identified early through these procedures. This enables additional support to be targeted so that they make good progress. Children are motivated to learn and all engage in activities. They clearly enjoy learning and are eager to talk about what they are doing. The consistently good, and often outstanding, teaching ensures that children make good progress to achieve the expected levels by the time they start Year 1.

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

- Improve standards and progress in mathematics, particularly in Years 3 to 6.
- Make better use of the information available on pupils' attainment and progress to provide an overview of whole school performance that is shared with all staff and governors.
- Ensure that leaders at all levels are involved in rigorous monitoring and evaluation of all aspects of the school's work.

A small proportion of schools, whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance, will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 3**

Pupils make satisfactory progress in Years 1 and 2 and attain broadly average standards in reading, writing and mathematics. In science, the improvements in teaching in Years 3 to 6, coupled with modifications to the curriculum, mean that the upward trend is continuing. Although the most recent test results for pupils in Year 6 show that standards rose slightly compared with those of the last few years, they still remained exceptionally low in English and mathematics. Pupils' overall achievement is now satisfactory with all pupils making steady progress towards their targets. Improvement in English, especially writing, is particularly impressive and pupils are now attaining standards close to those expected. The main focus of the last year has been on raising standards in English and this has resulted in dramatic improvement. Similar strategies to improve mathematics have been introduced more recently and are having some impact, although this is not yet resulting in a rise in standards. Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities (LDD) and pupils with EAL receive good support that enables them to make satisfactory progress towards their targets.

## Personal development and well-being

### Grade: 2

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Pupils have a good awareness of how to be healthy which is evident in their understanding of what they should eat and in their enjoyment and involvement in sport. Pupils contribute well to the school community. Older pupils take their mentoring role seriously and help younger pupils on the playground and when moving around the school. Behaviour is satisfactory. It is good in most lessons but, in a small number, some low level disruption slows the pace of learning. Pupils know how to stay safe and play sensibly on playground equipment. They feel confident that staff will deal effectively with any concerns about bullying.

Attendance has improved and is satisfactory. Most pupils are keen to learn because of the high emphasis placed by the school on raising self-esteem. Surveys show that parents are particularly positive about how much their children look forward to coming to school. As one said, 'My son really enjoys coming to this school now and he enjoys his lessons.' Pupils speak enthusiastically about their residential trips where they develop team building and cooperative skills essential to later life. Members of the school council feel that their voice is valued and welcome the opportunity to present to the governors their work on their project to make the school ecologically friendly. The pupils are developing a range of skills that will help to take them through life, although weaknesses in numeracy are still apparent.

## Quality of provision

### Teaching and learning

#### Grade: 3

The quality of teaching is improving. Teachers using a wider range of teaching strategies and there is now greater consistency in ensuring that all lessons have a learning aim. Good questioning skills challenge pupils to think beyond the obvious. Information and communication technology is used well to motivate pupils. Assessment information is used more effectively to plan work matched to the needs of pupils, although this is better established in English than in mathematics. Teachers do not always plan the work of teaching assistants well enough to ensure that best use is made of their time in supporting the learning of all pupils. Teachers give some good feedback to pupils in lessons to help them understand how well they are doing. Marking is generally helpful and pupils feel that comments help them to improve especially, in English. Teachers generally manage the pupils' behaviour well, but occasionally tolerate low level disruption for too long which slows progress.

### Curriculum and other activities

#### Grade: 3

The curriculum is improving to meet better pupils' needs and has some good features. Pupils are now taught in single age classes. A greater focus on supporting writing through all subjects of the curriculum is driving up standards especially in Years 3 to 6. Work has started on improving pupils' mathematical skills, particularly in using their knowledge of number to make quick calculations. However, this is still at an early stage and some of the work that pupils are given is at too low a level to extend their mathematical thinking. The pupils enjoy the good range of extra-curricular activities and take a pride in their sporting and musical skills. They enjoy and value opportunities to 'live' the experience through, for example, the Egyptian Day where they

dressed and lived as Ancient Egyptians. The focus on writing skills during cross-curricular topics such as these helps improve skills in English. The personal, social and health education programme contributes well to pupils' personal development and well-being. This ensures that pupils understand how to be safe, supportive of others, and understand the values and beliefs of different cultures. Good use is made of local resources, such as museums, to support the drive to improve standards.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 3**

The school cares for the pupils well. The support provided through a learning mentor is a key factor in the improved attendance. Adults deal with any issues that arise quickly and pupils feel that they are treated with kindness and consideration. Child protection procedures are satisfactory and reviewed regularly. The arrangements for supervision are satisfactory considering the problems that the building work presents the school.

The needs of pupils with LDD and EAL are assessed carefully and these pupils are provided with well-targeted support. Pupils' individual progress is monitored satisfactorily and the information used support learning through the setting of individual targets. Pupils like the targets set to support their learning, saying that these are 'right for them' and help identify areas they need to concentrate on in their work. The school is working hard with parents to promote regular attendance and reduce the number of holidays taken in term time.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 3**

Senior management working very closely with governors and the local authority to monitor and evaluate the work of the school are largely responsible for the improvements taking place. However, many subject leaders are still developing their monitoring roles as part of a cohesive team. As a result, not all subject leaders are sufficiently involved in developing the overall strategies for improving standards. Although the improved assessment procedures mean that senior management has have a clear understanding of how well individual pupils are doing, the procedures for obtaining an accurate overview of whole school performance are not rigorous enough. Assessment data is not analysed and presented in a way that enables leaders at all levels to have a clear understanding of how they can contribute to overall school improvement. Governance is good. The governing body provides good support and has reorganised the way that it works to improve its own effectiveness in monitoring the work of the school. Budget management and strategic planning by governors now supports school development well. For example, the governors have recognised that more teaching assistants are required to provide support more consistently across the school and new appointments are planned before the end of this term.

**Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaints about school inspection', which is available from Ofsted's website: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk).**

## Annex A

## Inspection judgements

|                                                                                                       |                |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------|
| Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate | School Overall |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------|

### Overall effectiveness

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

### Achievement and standards

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

### Personal development and well-being

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

### The quality of provision

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

<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.

## Annex A

**Leadership and management**

|                                                                                                                                              |     |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|
| <b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>                                       | 3   |
| How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education | 3   |
| How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards                                                              | 3   |
| The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation                                                                                            | 3   |
| How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can                     | 3   |
| How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money                                          | 3   |
| 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

14 November 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Rectory Farm Primary School, Northampton NN3 5DD

Thank you for your help when my colleague and I visited your school. You gave us a lot of information that helped us find out how well your school is doing and you were very polite when talking with us.

The school is continuing to get better and we think that it no longer needs as much help as it did last year. The school still has a lot to do to do, but is making good progress in ensuring that you are beginning to learn as well as you should.

- These are the things that we liked about your school.
- When you start school in the Reception class, good and sometimes outstanding teaching helps you make good progress.
- You are now doing much better in English because your writing is improving.
- You enjoy school and know how to stay healthy because your teachers look after you well.
- You enjoy the many interesting clubs and activities.
- You like the targets that your teachers are setting you to help you get better at your work.
- The governors are doing a good job to help make sure you have a good place in which to learn.
- This is what we have asked your school to do to help continue the improvements.
- Improve the progress that you make in mathematics in Years 3 to 6, so that you do as well in this subject as you do in English. You can help by telling teachers when the work is too easy.
- Make better use of the information that teachers have on your progress to check on how well the whole school is doing.
- Make sure that all leaders check on how well things are going in the areas for which they are responsible.

Thank you again for your help.

Yours sincerely

Stephen Lake Lead inspector

14 November 2007

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- You like the targets that your teachers are setting you to help you get better at your work.
- The governors are doing a good job to help make sure you have a good place in which to learn.

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- Make sure that all leaders check on how well things are going in the areas for which they are responsible.

Thank you again for your help.

Yours sincerely

Stephen Lake  
Lead inspector