

Rushton CofE (C) Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	124272
Local Authority	Staffordshire
Inspection number	314870
Inspection date	15 October 2007
Reporting inspector	David Driscoll

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

Type of school	First
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	4-9
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	24
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	John Pool
Headteacher	Alyson Hurst
Date of previous school inspection	3 March 2003
School address	Sugar Street Macclesfield SK11 0SG
Telephone number	01260 226303
Fax number	01260 226495

Age group	4-9
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

Rushton Primary is a very small school that serves a predominately rural area of Staffordshire. No pupils come from minority ethnic backgrounds. Although very few pupils have learning difficulties, the proportion varies with each year group. Some year groups have no pupils with learning difficulties, while others have 50%.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

Rushton is a fantastic little school that provides an outstanding education for its pupils. Parents describe it as 'one in a million' and praise the 'rich educational experience' offered to their children. The school operates like one giant family, where everyone looks out for each other and all get on well as friends, regardless of their age. In this environment, the pupils thrive. Standards are exceptionally high by the time the pupils leave. They make outstanding progress in their reading, mathematics and science. The key to their success lies in lessons where teachers make learning fun. The work is tremendously demanding but pupils are given the time to think and work things out for themselves. This is coupled with individual guidance of the very highest quality, so all are able to succeed. Progress in writing, although still good, is a little slower for boys because they do not find the topics they are writing about particularly motivating. The school's detailed tracking of progress very quickly identifies any pupil who is starting to fall behind. It is particularly effective in identifying, at an early stage, those who have learning difficulties, so that high quality support is given to help them make excellent progress.

As in any other good family, the school does not just concentrate on academic performance. The curriculum is built around developing the whole individual and helping them to appreciate what life is like for others who do not live in the countryside. As a result, pupils already have a very good understanding of other religions and cultures and the plight of those less fortunate than themselves. There are lots of opportunities for the pupils to take responsibility, especially in helping everyone involved with the school to live healthier lifestyles. Children quickly settle into the Foundation Stage. They soon become remarkably self-confident and pick up the exemplary behaviour and attitudes to work shown by older pupils. All staff have a deep knowledge of the pupils and are quick to spot any who are not completely happy.

The school is going from strength to strength under the excellent leadership of the headteacher and governors, who want to make it even better and clearly have all the skills to do so. The school's managers slightly underrate the quality of what it provides, but this is an indicator of the complete lack of complacency that exists throughout the school, rather than inaccurate evaluation. Everyone is pulling in the same direction in order to make the school a place where children love to learn, and they do! When asked what was best about school, most pupils replied either 'learning', 'fun lessons' or 'friends', which sums up the school.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 1

Children settle extremely quickly into the Foundation Stage. Most have previously joined lessons for one afternoon each week as part of PALS club, so they know the routines, the staff and the other children. Children's progress is checked continuously and a weekly report written so the staff have an outstanding knowledge of what each is capable of, and what they need to do next. The small class size means that activities are individually planned for them, with an excellent balance of play and more structured work, so they make the maximum progress. By the time they start Year 1, their standards are above average and they have made excellent progress.

What the school should do to improve further

- Provide boys with more exciting topics to write about.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

Being such a small school, standards on entry vary considerably from year to year. The one constant though is the outstanding progress made by pupils as they move through the school. By the time they leave at the age of nine, all have reached the standards expected for 11 year olds in most of their subjects and are exceptionally well prepared for the next stage of their education. The exception is in writing, where one or two, usually boys, progress at a slightly slower rate.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

The pupils are a joy to talk to and to be with. They are mature beyond their years, playing an excellent role in the community. Pupils help to organise groups, such as the Eco committee, where they work with adults to help make the world a better place and they plant sponsored bulbs to help those with chronic illnesses. They have a strong sense of caring and looking out for others, and slow down their game of football in the playground so younger ones can safely join in. Pupils have a remarkable understanding of how to stay healthy. Two pupils even monitor the amount of vegetables eaten at lunch, to try to get everyone up to '5 a day'. In lessons, they concentrate completely and work very hard; most of all though, they are happy. They love coming to school, and often insist on coming even when a parent thinks they are possibly not well enough. This leads to exceptionally high rates of attendance. Everyone is friends with everyone else, with very few disagreements. Even when the inspector said he thought a picture was of a baboon, not a monkey, the pupil simply replied, 'Well, we won't argue about it.'

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 1

Teaching can be summed up in three words: demanding, pacy and fun. Teachers use their deep knowledge of the pupils to set work that is very challenging but still achievable with hard work and concentration. Pupils stay totally engrossed in their tasks because teachers make lessons fun and interesting. A mathematics lesson on using the inverse of an equation to check an answer, for example, was presented as 'Can you beat Teddy?' Teddy apparently pops in each week to set problems for the pupils, and the pupils hate to lose. (Teddy does not seem to mind too much.) The pupils are given the time they need to think about their answers and work things out for themselves, which gives them excellent practice in applying skills they have to new situations, as well as learning new skills at an excellent rate.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The school uses its excellent links with parents to support a remarkable range of extra clubs, activities and trips. Many of these are firmly based on improving pupils' understanding of the environment, how to stay safe and healthy, and how others live in Britain today. Pupils grow their own vegetables in gardening club, for example, before going on to cook and serve them. They visit places of worship of different religions and cities so they can compare them with their own experiences. Work is often planned on an individual basis, especially in the Foundation

Stage. Girls like the topics they write about, such as 'My day at the seaside', so they make excellent progress in their writing. Boys, on the other hand, find this a bit boring, so write less and do not make as much progress. They want to write about such things as pirates and adventure, which teachers do not always appreciate.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Parents rightly praise the staff's knowledge of their children. Pupils are well looked after and have very few worries, because staff know them so well as individuals. Child protection measures are secure, but risk assessments for activities in school are not rigorous enough, and although accidents are extremely rare, they do not identify all potential hazards. Assessments are frequent and highly accurate, so teachers know exactly what it is that pupils can already do. This leads them to provide outstanding academic guidance, on an individual level, as to what they need to do to improve further. Pupils with learning difficulties are identified at the earliest possible stage, so highly effective support can be provided to them.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

This is a school where the headteacher and governors set themselves high standards, and meet them. Targets for the pupils and for the school's performance are very demanding, but all 'pulling together', the school community delivers a first class education. The constant drive to improve is based on an exceptionally thorough analysis of the progress that pupils make. Even the smallest weakness is spotted and acted upon. The school is already planning to address the issue about boys' writing. The monitoring of lessons is detailed, and is of exceptionally good quality on the part of governors, which leads all staff to understand how they can improve what they are doing. It is this complete lack of complacency that has led to such good improvement since the school was last inspected, and bodes so well for the school's future.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
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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?	1
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?	1
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	1
The standards ¹ 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

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 extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	1
The behaviour of learners	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?	1
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2

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

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	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

16 October 2007

Dear Children

Inspection of Rushton C of E VC Primary School, Macclesfield, SK11 0SG

Thank you all very much for all the help you gave me when I visited your school. You were terrific! You told me so much about all the things you do at school that it really helped me to understand why you like coming to school so much.

When I asked you to give the school a grade from 1 to 4, where 1 is 'brilliant', you all gave it a grade 1, and I agree with you. Yours is a fantastic school that gives you an excellent education. You like lessons because they are fun, but they also make you think hard and work things out for yourselves, so you learn lots of new things. By the time you leave Rushton you have learnt much more than most other children of your age. You do incredibly well in your reading, mathematics and science work, but some of the boys find the things they are asked to write about a bit boring. So we have asked your teachers to give the boys more exciting topics. Perhaps you could tell them what you would really like to write about. Your teachers know you very well. They know how well you are doing. This means they can give you work that is hard, but that you can do because they know just how much help to give you.

You are all so friendly too. You make sure that other children are happy and safe in the playground and know a lot about how other people live, both in this country and abroad. You told me how much you like all the extra clubs, and especially the trips. The teachers make sure no harm can come to you on trips, but they need to do the same checks on things you do in school too. I was very impressed by all the work you do on staying healthy and how you are helping make the environment better. Most of all though, I was impressed with how grown-up you seem. You are not silly in lessons, you work hard and concentrate on the things you are given to do.

Your school is getting better and better every year, because the headteacher and the other grown-ups who run it work very hard to check that everything is as good as it possibly could be. When they find something that is not quite right, they get it sorted out very quickly.

You love your school, and I loved visiting it and meeting you all. So thanks again.

David Driscoll Lead inspector

Annex B

16 October 2007

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Lead inspector