

Rawtenstall Balladen Community Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	119280
Local authority	Lancashire
Inspection number	379767
Inspection dates	31 January 2012–1 February 2012
Lead inspector	Anna Dawson

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	193
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Nick Pilling
Headteacher	Peter Sumner
Date of previous school inspection	22 May 2007
School address	Linden Lea Rawtenstall Rossendale BB4 6DX
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Introduction

Inspection team

Anna Dawson
Jennifer Platt

Additional inspector
Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. Inspectors spent over six hours observing lessons; seven teachers were seen and inspectors made eight short observations of pupils' learning. These observations included listening to pupils read and talking to them about their enjoyment of books. Meetings were held with representatives of the governing body, school staff, and groups of pupils. Inspectors observed the school's work and looked at a range of documentation relating to school management and improvement planning, pupils' progress and achievement and safeguarding. The team considered questionnaires returned from pupils, staff and 110 from parents and carers. Inspectors also took into account responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) in planning the inspection.

Information about the school

The school is average in size compared with other primary schools. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is above average. Almost all pupils are of a White British heritage and no pupils speak English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils who are disabled and those with special educational needs, including those with a statement of special educational needs is above the national average. The school meets the current floor standard. The school has gained the Healthy School status.

A children's centre, adjoining the school has been opened since the last inspection in May 2007 and is inspected separately. A report for this provision can be found on the Ofsted website.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory and 4 is inadequate
Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall Effectiveness	1
Achievement of pupils	1
Quality of teaching	1
Behaviour and safety of pupils	1
Leadership and management	1

Key Findings

- This is an outstanding school. Pupils thrive in this inclusive school. All staff work very successfully to enable pupils to overcome any barriers to learning. As a result, pupils reach their potential by the time they leave. The school has gone from strength to strength since the last inspection. Parents’ and carers’ high regard for the school’s work is evident in many positive comments, such as, ‘This is a lovely school which I would recommend to anyone’.
- Pupils get off to an exceptionally good start in the Early Years Foundation Stage and make rapid progress. Consistently good and better progress is made by all pupils throughout the school. The school is successful in closing any gaps in achievement by different groups of pupils. For example, many of those who are disabled or who have special educational needs make extremely good progress. Attainment by the end of Key Stage 2 is significantly above the national average overall, in English and mathematics. Although pupils achieve very well in reading, the school’s book provision is limited and does not motivate some pupils to read further.
- Because of the excellent quality of teaching and the highly effective curriculum, pupils make significantly better progress than most other pupils nationally. Teaching is particularly characterised by a consistent approach to rigorously assessing and planning challenging targets for each pupil’s learning. Teachers are ably supported by skilled teaching assistants. All staff work very successfully to ensure a happy learning environment where all pupils are cared for and succeed.
- Pupils behave very well and want to learn. The school monitors behaviour very closely and pupils feel very secure in the knowledge that any incidents are dealt with quickly and effectively. Pupils know they are listened to and feel a sense of ownership and take pride in their school.
- Leadership and management are outstanding. Leaders know very well the school’s strengths and areas for development. The staff are particularly successful in assessing pupils’ learning and are adept at finding strategies to improve any areas of weakness.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise pupils' enthusiasm for reading by providing a richer range of books and better promoting the culture for reading.

Main Report

Achievement of pupils

When children start in the Reception class, the vast majority make rapid progress from starting points below those usually expected in all areas of learning. For example, targets are set by the staff for the development of reading, writing and mathematical skills. By the end of the Reception Year, because of excellent provision, most are reaching and some are exceeding the levels expected of most other pupils nationally and children have learned very well how to work and play together.

Pupils' very good progress is continued throughout both Key Stages 1 and 2. During Year 1, pupils continue to learn the basics of reading through structured work in letters and sounds. Most pupils successfully use a range of strategies, including contextual cues to understand what they are reading. By the end of Year 2, pupils' attainment in reading, writing and mathematics is significantly above the national average. As children move up the school, consistently good and better teaching results in pupils making very good progress. By the time pupils leave Year 6, they have achieved outstandingly well and their attainment is significantly above average in reading, writing and mathematics. These results have been sustained over the last three years because the staff are passionate in providing help and resources to ensure all pupils achieve as well as they can. In particular, pupils who are disabled and who have special educational needs, achieve exceptionally well. Gaps in achievement between different groups of pupils such as those eligible for free school meals have been narrowed. Reading and mathematics attainments are slightly higher than writing throughout the school because some more-able boys do not consistently attain their expected higher levels. This has been recognised by the school and interventions and concepts such as 'it's cool to be clever' to encourage boys to write are having a positive impact on their attainment. Parents and carers feel that their children achieve very well. This concurs with inspection findings.

Quality of teaching

The staff work together exceptionally well as a team to provide those very effective teaching and learning experiences that ensure that all pupils achieve as well as they can. All staff have high expectations and an excellent grasp and knowledge of individual pupils' abilities and attainments. They set regular challenging targets. The teachers have exceptionally good subject knowledge and prepare lessons thoroughly, employing a range of resources and strategies, which make lessons enjoyable. Lesson planning is matched carefully to groups and individual pupils, who are often supported with the excellent help from skilled teaching assistants. From talking to some pupils, it is clear that they enjoy challenging work and rise to the challenge. Such an example of very effective practice was seen in Year 6. Very challenging questioning and a full range of methods ensured pupils' understanding of multiplication, place value and times tables. The class teacher set a rapid pace but

constantly scanned the class to check pupils' understanding of vocabulary and teaching points. Learning was constantly reinforced. Teachers' marking is positive and helpful, guiding pupils to their next learning steps. All pupils know and take ownership of their targets. Other lessons which combine two subjects together, such as history and art and design, where for example, pupils work together to research, design and make Viking long boats, make learning more meaningful and enjoyable. These topic lessons make a significant contribution to developing their spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding. Even though pupils achieve exceptionally well in reading and enjoy high quality texts in lessons, the school does not have a wide enough range of books to motivate all pupils to follow up on their interests and favourite authors, and develop their enjoyment of reading. Without exception, parents and carers who completed a questionnaire praised the quality of teaching, a view with which inspectors concur.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Typically, pupils behave exceptionally well. Older pupils were keen that inspectors knew how behaviour in and around the school has improved, particularly in the last four years. Attendance that has risen from below to above average and the absence of any exclusion within the last six years are testament to the consistent approach of the staff in caring for pupils and managing their behaviour. Pupils respond with their enthusiasm for learning and the evident pride they take in their school. Lessons are lively, but run smoothly as pupils often discuss and learn from each other in small groups, as well as listening attentively when required.

Bullying of any form, including racism is rare. When questioned, pupils have an extremely good understanding of what constitutes bullying. Most incidents arise from minor squabbles and disagreements in the playground, which are immediately and agreeably sorted out with the help of the staff. This is also the view of parents and carers. As a result of the exceptionally good care they receive, pupils feel extremely safe and secure. They are considerate and respectful and understand how to look after themselves. In the words of one pupil 'The teachers are really nice, they listen and take care of you, we feel safe in school'. The oldest children are all prefects. They wear a special uniform and enjoy setting a good example by, for instance, taking great care of younger children, helping them with their reading and assisting their teachers with getting the hall ready for assemblies and physical education. The pupils' voice is strong. With the help of the headteacher pupils run committees for 'learning', 'anti-bullying', 'anti-racism' and 'health and safety'. Any concerns are discussed, acted upon and resolved successfully with the help of their teachers.

Leadership and management

The headteacher, with the very effective support of the assistant headteacher, gives the school strong leadership and direction, with a clear focus on continually driving up achievement. Leaders ensure that pupils succeed academically and personally, whatever interests and special abilities they may have. This is an inclusive school, which very effectively promotes equality of opportunity for all pupils and is fully committed to tackle any discrimination. Safeguarding requirements are met. Self-evaluation is robust and accurate, providing an excellent basis for improvement planning. The assessments of pupils' work are frequently and rigorously interrogated to ensure that targets are met. Any weaknesses are quickly identified and intervention sought to enable pupils to get back on track. For example, when some older pupils were recently struggling with aspects of mathematics and reading, individual one-to-one teaching was successful in helping pupils to overcome

weaknesses and attain their targets. The staff, alongside senior leaders, are well trained and work exceptionally well together as a team to consistently implement the school aims and priorities. Teachers and teaching assistants are currently working on improving pupils' mental mathematics, particularly in recall on number bonds and writing for some boys. This is having a positive impact on pupils' writing and knowledge and recall of tables. Staff make great efforts to support the most potentially vulnerable pupils and to help them achieve as highly as possible. For example, the high priority the school gives to pupils' personal, social and health education is particularly beneficial to raising pupils' self-esteem and confidence.

The practical and creative curriculum, which links subjects together through topics, significantly enhances pupils' learning. Additional opportunities are offered in terms of clubs and after-school activities for sports, arts, and the environment, and other activities requested by pupils. This allows pupils and the staff to tap into their interests and talents. Business and enrichment activities for older pupils, such as an inter-school, paper bridge building competition and setting up a company to buy and sell goods, are not only fun but also encourage pupils to hold high aspirations for themselves for the future.

The governing body has a thorough and accurate understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. In the words of the Chair of Governing Body, 'We provide education for all children in a safe environment where all groups of children are able to fulfil their potential'. Members of the governing body are experienced, exceptionally well informed and supportive, but at the same time robustly hold the school to account by evaluating spending against the outcomes for pupils. Individual governors visit the school regularly and support and promote the school's contribution to the community. The recent excellent 'Best Start' programme for parents and carers and their children is helping pupils to learn at home as well as in school. The success of this programme is evident in the increasing number of parent volunteers in school and the gains in learning made by their children. There is very good improvement from the last inspection. The school serves the pupils and the community extremely well and has exceptionally good capacity to improve further.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	46	46	8	0
Primary schools	8	47	40	5
Secondary schools	14	38	40	8
Special schools	28	48	20	4
Pupil referral units	15	50	29	5
All schools	11	46	38	6

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2010 to 31 August 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Behaviour	how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the governors and headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.
Safety	how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



2 February 2012

Dear Pupils

**Inspection of Rawtenstall Balladen Community Primary School,
Rossendale, BB4 6DX**

Thank you for making us very welcome when we inspected your school recently. We really enjoyed being with you talking about your school with you and your teachers, and looking at your work. I would especially like to thank those of you who gave up your break time to talk to us about your school. Your comments were very useful when it came to making decisions about your school.

I am writing to tell you what we found out. Balladen Community Primary School is an outstanding school. Your school is extremely well led by the headteacher. He is exceptionally well supported by the assistant headteacher, your teachers and teaching assistants. We know that you appreciate that the staff take great care of you and try their very best so that you succeed as well as you can. You are happy in school and feel safe. The pride you take in belonging to this school shows in how exceptionally well you behave and want to learn in lessons. Older pupils set a good example by helping with the running of the school, by serving on the pupil committees and by helping younger pupils. Well done to all of you.

We have asked the teachers to make the school even better by giving you a wider range of books to read to encourage you to enjoy reading even more. There are lots of things you can all do to get to your targets. Always do your best every day, never give up, carry on working hard and especially enjoy reading.

Yours sincerely

Anna Dawson
Lead inspector

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