

Richard Clarke First School

Inspection report

Unique reference number	124052
Local authority	Staffordshire
Inspection number	380786
Inspection dates	22–23 February 2012
Lead inspector	Helen Morrison

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

Type of school	First
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–9
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	102
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	John Hough
Headteacher	Amanda Shaw
Date of previous school inspection	29 January 2007
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Introduction

Inspection team

Helen Morrison

Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. The inspector visited eleven lessons taught by seven teachers, spending six hours directly observing pupils' learning in class. She heard pupils read and looked at their work in books and on display. Meetings were held with pupils, staff and a representative from the governing body. The inspector took account of the responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) in planning the inspection, observed the school's work, and looked at: curriculum planning; data on pupils' achievement, including their current progress; evidence relating to the care and protection of pupils; plans for improvement and records of the school's monitoring of its performance. She also analysed 83 questionnaires that were returned by parents and carers, together with 44 from pupils and 13 from staff.

Information about the school

Richard Clarke First is a smaller than average-sized school where almost all of the pupils are from White British backgrounds and none is learning English as an additional language. Very few pupils are known to be eligible for free school meals. The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is below average.

Since the last inspection, there have been several changes of staff, including the headteacher, Early Years Foundation Stage leader and the office manager. One teacher passed away recently following a long absence through illness.

The school has gained a number of awards including Artsmark, Dyslexia Friendly full status, the International School Award, Sing Up Gold and National Healthy School Status.

An independently managed nursery, which also offers before- and after-school care for pupils from the school, operates each day. This is subject to a separate inspection and report.

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	2
Achievement of pupils	2
Quality of teaching	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils	1
Leadership and management	2

Key findings

- Richard Clarke First is a good school in which the school’s core values of teamwork, respect, consideration, friendship and success are embraced by pupils and adults alike and underpin the life and work of the school. As a result, pupils are confident and enthusiastic learners and their behaviour is outstanding.
- There is a good focus on achievement alongside the school’s caring approach. Consequently, attainment in reading and writing at the end of Key Stage 1 has been above average in recent years, although standards in mathematics are average. Pupils make very good progress in Years 3 and 4 and a minority of them reach standards well above those expected for their age in English and mathematics.
- Teaching is good overall. It is frequently outstanding in Key Stage 2 where teachers’ high expectations ensure that learning takes place at a brisk pace. Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage are taught well and make good progress. In some lessons in Key Stage 1, particularly in mathematics, work is not sufficiently challenging for more-able pupils. Across the school pupils are not always given enough time to respond to teachers’ marking.
- Pupils show exceptional politeness to visitors and courtesy to each other and to adults. They have very positive attitudes to learning and attendance is above average. All adults consistently expect high standards of behaviour to which pupils respond very well.
- The school is led and managed well. Leaders have a good understanding of the school’s strengths and where it needs to improve. Professional development opportunities for staff have been well targeted so that satisfactory teaching in mathematics is improving, although there are still too few opportunities for teachers to share the existing good and outstanding practice. Parents and carers are overwhelmingly supportive of the school.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the proportion of high-quality teaching in Key Stage 1, particularly in mathematics, by:

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- sharing current good and outstanding practice regarding the expectations of pupils and the pace at which they progress
 - providing pupils with more opportunities to develop their mathematical skills in other subjects across the curriculum
 - ensuring that more-able pupils are fully challenged in every lesson so that they reach the high standards of which they are capable.
- Ensure that all pupils are given sufficient time to respond to the good advice they are given on how to improve their work.

Main report

Achievement of pupils

Pupils enjoy learning and all groups of pupils achieve well. Children start in the Reception class with knowledge and skills in line with those expected nationally, and leave at the end of Year 4 with attainment which is above the level expected for their age. This represents good progress across the school.

In the Reception class, well-planned activities and effective adult intervention, particularly to develop children's knowledge of phonics (the sounds that letters make), ensure that all children make good progress so that they enter Year 1 with skills above those expected nationally. Attainment at the end of Key Stage 1 in reading and writing has been above the national average for the last two years and current Year 2 pupils' work show that this has been maintained. However, attainment in mathematics, while broadly average, does not yet match that achieved in reading and writing because pupils are given too few opportunities to use their mathematical knowledge and skills in other subjects and, occasionally, the pace of learning is not fast enough when a few more-able pupils find the work too easy.

In Years 3 and 4, pupils' learning and progress are good; they are engaged, have excellent attitudes and maintain their concentration well. For example, pupils in Year 3 responded with enthusiasm to inspiring teaching to solve the problem of seating arrangements at 'King Arnold's' round table. In this lesson, more-able pupils were very well challenged to calculate how many seating combinations there were for five knights or more.

Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make good progress because they are given carefully targeted teaching which supports small, manageable steps in learning.

Pupils' reading of simple texts shows understanding and is generally accurate. Pupils in Year 1 use their knowledge of the sounds made by individual letters to decode words, though some are less confident in identifying words with irregular spelling. Pupils in Year 4 read with expression and evident enjoyment. They talk confidently about authors whose work they enjoy.

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Quality of teaching

In the best lessons, teachers use good subject knowledge to plan exciting curricular activities which enthuse pupils and capture their interest and imagination. For example, children in the Early Years Foundation Stage 'walked the plank' and counted treasure in the pirates' ship with enthusiasm. In a science lesson in Year 2, pupils concentrated well for a sustained period when investigating the materials used to make items in their classroom. Pupils were amazed when subsequent questioning and discussion demonstrated the large variety of materials around them.

Activities are matched carefully to pupils' learning needs with 'comfy, stretch and challenge' tasks which reflect teachers' high expectations of all pupils. For example, in a literacy lesson in Year 4, more-able pupils were challenged to use powerful vocabulary when describing imaginary monsters and wrote poetry of a very high standard which demonstrated good understanding of similes and metaphors. Pupils say they enjoy lessons and are confident that they will be given help with their learning when they need it. For example, in this lesson good support was provided unobtrusively to pupils who needed additional help so that one girl, finding the work difficult, quietly moved to another table to access adult support which enabled her to make good progress.

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted well. They listen to one another, work well in pairs and groups and are encouraged to be creative and imaginative.

Pupils across the school regularly evaluate their own learning in lessons. Marking is up to date and constructive, and usually sets clear targets for improvement. However, pupils are not always given enough time to consider and respond to marking so it does not consistently help them to improve their work. Homework, particularly reading, reinforcement of phonic knowledge and research activities, is used well to develop the skills pupils need to learn for themselves.

Almost all parents and carers say their children are making good progress and most say their children are taught well. For example, one parent said, 'The staff work hard to make sure every child makes progress'. Inspection evidence supports these views.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Pupils' behaviour is outstanding. Pupils are unfailingly polite, kind and considerate towards one another and encourage each other to do well. Pupils show exemplary attitudes to learning and are genuinely enthused by lessons. Adults are excellent role models and have successful, consistent behaviour management strategies using the school's five core values which form the basis of the school's high expectations. However, these strategies are seldom needed – a 'look' from the teacher proves enough.

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When asked about different types of bullying, such as persistent name-calling relating to gender, race, disability or special educational need or cyber-bullying, it is clear that pupils have a good understanding for their ages of what these are, but say 'There isn't any here.' In response to the pupils' questionnaire, most pupils say behaviour is good in school and in lessons and that any very rare instances of bullying are dealt with very well. As a result, they feel safe in school. The school's behaviour records also show that behaviour seen during the inspection is typical, and there have been no exclusions or incidents of racist language or behaviour for several years.

Pupils have an excellent understanding about how to be safe and to look after themselves, particularly with regard to road safety, water safety and when using the internet.

Parents and carers hold overwhelmingly positive views about the behaviour and safety of pupils. All those who responded to the inspection questionnaire say their children are well looked after and feel safe, and almost all indicate there is a good standard of behaviour at school. Most parents agree with the statement 'the school deals well with bullying' with none disagreeing. Some parents and carers feel they could not respond to the statement because they are not aware of any bullying having taken place.

Attendance is above average and almost all pupils are consistently punctual.

Leadership and management

The skilful leadership of the headteacher, together with the high expectations and ambition of all staff and the governing body, underpins the school's good capacity for sustained improvement. Accurate school self-evaluation is linked to professional development for teachers. The monitoring of the impact of initiatives, such as the introduction of termly meetings to discuss pupils' progress based on the school's analysis of the progress of different groups of pupils, is rigorous. These factors have brought about good improvement since the last inspection. The school is committed to equality of opportunity and tackling discrimination and identifies quickly the needs of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs so they achieve well.

The curriculum is broad and balanced and meets pupils' needs well. It promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well. Pupils learn about different cultures and beliefs in lessons and through first-hand experiences. For example, in a religious education lesson in Year 1, pupils explored the importance of symbols for followers of three world religions. There are good links with a school in Birmingham which promote pupils' understanding of and their respect for lifestyles that may be different from their own. Pupils have a good understanding of right and wrong and this is reflected in their outstanding behaviour. The arts are a strong feature of the curriculum. For example, pupils enjoy singing every day and pupils in Year 4 spoke with much enthusiasm about their participation in a story-telling

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competition. The Early Years Foundation Stage curriculum captures the children's interest and imagination. There is a good balance of adult-led activities and those the children choose for themselves, giving them good opportunities to use their own initiative.

Partnerships with parents and carers are strong. The vast majority of parents say the school responds well to their concerns and helps them to support their children's learning.

Members of the governing body are well informed and hold the school to account well. Safeguarding procedures meet statutory requirements and are regularly evaluated. These, together with regularly updated training for all staff and teaching about safety, ensure that pupils are safe in school.

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.
Attendance	the regular attendance of pupils at school and in lessons, taking into account the school's efforts to encourage good attendance.
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.



24 February 2012

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Richard Clarke First School, Rugeley, WS15 3BT

Thank you for welcoming me to your school and showing me what you are learning. I really enjoyed talking with you, sharing your lessons and reading your questionnaires. I was really impressed by your excellent behaviour and how friendly and polite you are.

I agree with you that yours is a good school. Here are some of the reasons why.

- You told me you enjoy school, and your parents and carers, rightly, say that you are happy and feel safe there.
- You behave extremely well around school and get on really well together.
- You make good progress and by the end of Year 4 you reach standards in English and mathematics which are higher than those of most nine-year-olds.
- Your teachers make lessons exciting and interesting and the teaching in most lessons is good or even better.

So that you make even faster progress, I have asked Miss Shaw, your teachers and the governing body to:

- make all lessons as good as the best ones are now
- ensure that those of you who are capable of reaching high standards, particularly in mathematics, always have challenging work to do
- make sure you use your numeracy skills in other subjects you study
- give you opportunities to follow up your teachers' marking so you use their advice to improve your work.

You can all help by continuing to try your best at everything you do and demonstrating your school's core values – working together as a team and giving respect, consideration and friendship to each other so you have lots of success now and in the future.

Yours sincerely

Helen Morrison
Lead inspector

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