

Rush Common School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	123070
Local Authority	Oxfordshire
Inspection number	380587
Inspection dates	15–16 November 2011
Reporting inspector	Barbara Atcheson

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005. The registered childcare provision, managed by the governing body, was inspected under section 49 of the Childcare Act 2006.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	413
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Carol Oster Warriner
Headteacher	Maxine Evans
Date of previous school inspection	6–7 June 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by four additional inspectors. The inspectors observed teaching and learning in 33 lessons, taught by 14 teachers. They also held meetings with members of the governing body, staff and groups of pupils. They observed the school's work and looked at school policies, including those relating to safeguarding, minutes of governing body meetings and planning documents. They scrutinised pupils' work and evaluated questionnaires returned from 174 parents and carers as well as those returned by staff and pupils.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at a number of key areas.

- Whether the quality of teaching and learning and the rigour and accuracy of assessment are good enough to ensure that all pupils are challenged at the right level and make good progress, particularly the hearing-impaired, more able pupils and those in Years 3 to 6.
- The progress and attainment of girls and more able pupils in reading and writing at Key Stage 1.
- The effectiveness of leaders at all levels in raising achievement and sustaining improvement.

Information about the school

This primary school is larger than average. A very large majority of the pupils are of White British heritage. A below average proportion of pupils are identified as having special educational needs and/or disabilities, including those with a statement of special educational needs. Their needs mainly relate to speech, language and social communication difficulties, moderate and specific learning difficulties, emotional and behavioural difficulties and hearing impairment. There is a local authority base for hearing-impaired pupils on the site. A small number of these pupils are integrated into the school. Very few of the pupils are known to be eligible for free school meals.

Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage are provided for in two Reception classes. A new leader of the Early Years Foundation Stage was appointed for September. The school runs before-school and after-school clubs. The school has gained several awards including Healthy Schools, Activemark Gold and Eco-schools green award. The governing body has gained Governor Mark.

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: how good is the school?

1

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

The school provides an outstanding education for its pupils. The headteacher's dynamic leadership inspires others to have high aspirations for themselves and their pupils and use innovative practice to ensure pupils are given the best opportunities to reach their full potential. All staff provide an outstanding level of care, guidance and support. The school has a very warm, welcoming, stimulating environment where pupils feel extremely safe, secure and ready to learn. This is reflected in the pupils' outstanding behaviour and high level of attendance. Parents and carers appreciate this care and have overwhelmingly positive views about what the school does for their children.

Pupils benefit from a very rich and varied curriculum, which is particularly strong in the creative use of information and communication technology (ICT). Highly tailored programmes of work meet the changing needs of individuals and groups and have helped ensure that attainment at the end of Years 2 and 6 has been high for the last five years.

Senior leaders make good use of a wide range of rigorous monitoring activities to drive and secure improvement in the quality of teaching and learning. As a result, teaching is good overall and some is outstanding. Where teachers provide practical activities, pupils quickly become confident learners, but where they do not have these, progress slows. In general teachers make the steps to success clear so pupils know and understand what they have to do and this accelerates progress. However, there are a few occasions when this is not the case. Similarly there are some missed opportunities in the Early Years Foundation Stage for adults to engage with children in a meaningful way as they play and this means progress is currently good.

This is a school which is always looking for ways to improve and has a proven record of dealing quickly and successfully with challenges and priorities. As soon as the school's hitherto excellent rates of progress from Key Stage 1 to Key Stage 2 dipped in 2011, the school lost no time in rigorously monitoring and analysing the situation and taking advice before implementing numerous actions to redress the situation. As a result, all pupils currently make good and sometimes better progress across the curriculum and in each of the key stages. The governing body make an exceptional contribution to the work of the school which has led to the school making significant improvement since the previous inspection. The school's accurate self-evaluation

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recognises that increasing the amount of good and outstanding teaching is the key priority and that this has not yet been fully embedded. Consequently, the school has a good capacity to sustain improvement.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase further the amount of good and outstanding lessons by:
 - ensuring pupils are always actively involved in their learning and clear about the steps they need to take to achieve the learning objective in each lesson
 - making sure adults consistently interact with children in the Reception classes as they play so that learning through play is more purposeful.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

1

Children join the school with skills and understanding that are at the levels expected nationally for their age. Lesson observations and scrutiny of work show that all groups of pupils, including boys and girls, make good progress throughout the school and across the curriculum. Standards are high, and consequently achievement is outstanding.

A key factor in the success of all pupils is their obvious enjoyment of learning, particularly where they play an active role. This was seen very clearly in an outstanding Year 5 numeracy lesson where pupils had to calculate a perimeter accurately to solve a problem. The pupils were highly motivated by a task related to the book they were reading in literacy and showed an excellent understanding of mathematical concepts. They negotiated, discussed and listened to each other as they struggled to get to grips with the challenge. The teacher's skilful intervention and well framed questions prompted pupils to reconsider, modify and adjust their thinking. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, including those from the hearing-impaired base, also make good progress. This is because of the effective support they receive from well trained teaching assistants who deliver accurately targeted learning programmes to support their needs.

Pupils work and play harmoniously. Attendance rates are high because pupils love coming to school. Behaviour is exemplary. They are polite and have extremely positive attitudes towards learning, readily taking responsibility for their own learning, self-correcting and always trying to improve. They are emphatic that there is no bullying and know that there will always be someone who will listen to them. Pupils are very knowledgeable about how to stay safe. They talk happily about the work the school has done to achieve its Healthy Schools award and Activemark Gold and their preference to lead a healthy lifestyle. In the before- and after-school club, (BASC), opportunities to grow vegetables and cook them promote pupils' healthy lifestyles further. They are proud to be prefects, members of the eco council and the school council, talking knowledgeably about the work that they have done to gain

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the Eco-schools green award. Pupils’ social, moral, spiritual and cultural development is outstanding. Pupils are keenly aware of what is right and what is wrong. They are extremely caring and considerate to each other as well as courteous and polite. As a result, they form strong relationships both with each other and with adults. They have a very good understanding of cultural diversity gained through the curriculum, community cohesion and their work within the Comenius Project.

These are the grades for pupils’ outcomes

Pupils’ achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	1
Taking into account:	
Pupils’ attainment ¹	1
The quality of pupils’ learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
The extent to which pupils feel safe	1
Pupils’ behaviour	1
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	1
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1
Taking into account:	
Pupils’ attendance ¹	1
The extent of pupils’ spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1

How effective is the provision?

Where teaching is good or better, pupils play an active part in their learning and are clear about the steps they need to take to achieve the learning objective. For example, in an outstanding Year 6 literacy lesson pupils were very clear about how to set about examining the biography of Simon Cowell because they had written a biography of their own. They had an exceptionally good knowledge and understanding of the level at which they were operating and what they had to do in order to reach their next learning target. They set to work immediately, relishing the opportunity to share the products of their homework. However, there are a few lessons when pupils sit passively whilst the teacher talks at length and there is too little time left for them to carry out their own tasks. In a small number of lessons pupils do not have a clear understanding of the steps that they have to take to achieve success and this limits their progress. The quality of teachers’ marking is good and helps pupils to improve their work. However, the presentation of pupils’ work is not always as neat as it could be.

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low

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The curriculum makes a very strong contribution to pupils’ achievement and their great enjoyment of school. The rich opportunities afforded to the pupils are clearly demonstrated as part of the highly successful ICT project linking home and school which is part of the school’s website. It clearly demonstrates the excellent range of pupils’ work within and beyond the classroom and is hugely powerful in engaging parents and carers in their children’s learning. The very few pupils who do not have access to a computer at home use those in school and are able to print any documents they may need to work from. The popular BASC provides a good opportunity for social interaction, and pupils enjoy a wide range of activities which provide an informal but valuable variety of learning experiences.

The extremely high level of care, guidance and support enjoyed by all pupils and their families ensures that every pupil participates fully in all aspects of school life. The excellent work carried out by the pupil welfare support team ensures that external support is sought quickly when needed to improve the learning and well-being of the pupils and help families when they have to face difficulties.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils’ needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	1
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher’s reflective practice has made her a leader in her field and her expertise is often sought when other schools are facing difficulty. Senior leaders and members of the governing body share her high aspirations to make the school one of the top 10% in the country. Governors make an exceptional contribution to the work and direction of the school, working alongside leaders to formulate the school improvement plan. There is a strong emphasis on professional development and ensuring that it is well targeted and of high quality. Members of staff who did their training at the school have matured into good and outstanding teachers and some members of staff have moved on to headship. Senior leaders and middle managers make good use of a whole range of monitoring activities, coach, model and share good practice. However, they recognise that a few inconsistencies exist and are determined to move teaching from good to outstanding. Partnerships with parents and carers are outstanding. The parent representative group makes an important contribution to decision-making. For example it tested the quality of clothing when the uniform was changed and reading records have been amended in the light of its views.

The school places the promotion of equality of opportunity at the heart of all its

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work. There is no discrimination. The extremely well organised use of ICT ensures that pupils who are ill or away can quickly catch up with their work and parents and carers who cannot attend workshops can access them on-line. An accurate tracking system highlights the underperformance of individuals and well-tailored learning programmes are quickly implemented. The appointment of a dedicated pupil welfare support officer ensures that vulnerable pupils and their families have the same opportunities as others. She also plays a central role in the training of teachers and teaching assistants in safeguarding within the locality and the county. Consequently, the school is a leader of high quality practice with regard to safeguarding. All arrangements are comprehensively reviewed and fully understood and acted upon by staff. Checks on the suitability of adults to work with children are thorough and child protection arrangements are very secure and updated regularly.

The school’s commitment to promote community cohesion is outstanding. It is a highly cohesive community where pupils from all backgrounds play and work happily. They learn about and respect the beliefs of others through links with schools in Africa, Canada and Europe and the celebration of the varied cultures existing within the school. A recently established link with a local Oxford City school for Key Stage 1 pupils has enhanced the provision well.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	1
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	1
The effectiveness of the school’s engagement with parents and carers	1
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	1
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	1
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	1

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children make good progress and reach levels above those expected by the time they enter Year 1. They settle quickly in the welcoming atmosphere because their personal development is good, relationships are strong and they are well cared for. Staff foster positive attitudes to learning and, as a result, children behave well, are confident and sustain their concentration. They enjoy the exciting opportunities that

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exist for exploration and discovery both indoors and outdoors that add effectively to their enjoyment. During the inspection they enjoyed painting Rangoli patterns, dressing up in Indian clothes and dancing to Indian music as well as making cars or a stage for performances. However, some children could benefit from more adult involvement in their play to encourage them to sustain concentration in a more purposeful way. Short daily sessions on letter sounds provide a good basis for early reading and writing. All children have a learning journal, though these are not yet sufficiently developed as a way of recording children’s achievement for children, parents and carers and staff. Leadership and management are good. The new leader has only been in post for eight weeks but she has already got to grips with what needs to be done. She is effectively focused on helping children to make good progress, promoting their welfare and ensuring that partnerships with parents and carers and safeguarding procedures are good.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2

Views of parents and carers

In the above average return of questionnaires, the overwhelming majority of parents and carers who responded were positive about all aspects of school life. Evidence from the inspection supports parents’ and carers’ views that their children thoroughly enjoy school and that care for their health and safety is outstanding. It also supports parents’ and carers’ views that teaching is good and that the school is led and managed very well.

A very small minority of parents and carers commented that the school does not take account of their suggestions and concerns. Inspection evidence showed that the school uses questionnaires, has a parents representative group to voice opinion and provide a constructive contribution to decision-making in the school as well as many informal opportunities to discuss issues as they arise. Many parents and carers commented positively about this aspect of the school’s work.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted’s questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Rush Common School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 174 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 413 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	102	59	66	38	5	3	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	128	74	43	25	2	1	1	1
The school informs me about my child’s progress	75	43	86	49	7	4	1	1
My child is making enough progress at this school	84	48	71	41	12	7	3	2
The teaching is good at this school	102	59	54	31	7	4	1	1
The school helps me to support my child’s learning	88	51	65	37	13	7	3	2
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	90	52	70	40	8	5	4	2
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	75	43	80	46	6	3	0	0
The school meets my child’s particular needs	69	40	80	46	13	7	5	3
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	69	40	79	45	8	5	6	3
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	59	34	76	44	18	10	6	3
The school is led and managed effectively	90	52	59	34	11	6	2	1
Overall, I am happy with my child’s experience at this school	100	57	58	33	11	6	0	0

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

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	43	47	10	0
Primary schools	6	46	42	6
Secondary schools	14	36	41	9
Sixth forms	15	42	41	3
Special schools	30	48	19	3
Pupil referral units	14	50	31	5
All schools	10	44	39	6

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2010 to 08 April 2011 and 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.

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

Sixth form figures reflect the judgements made for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on 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 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:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement. ■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils. ■ The quality of teaching. ■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships. ■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
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.

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.



17 November 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Rush Common School, Abingdon, OX14 2AW

Thank you for being so friendly when we came to your school. We thoroughly enjoyed visiting your lessons and talking to you. You were very helpful and polite. Your school gives you an outstanding standard of education and so there are a lot of things your school does well.

You told us that you enjoy school enormously and that you feel very safe. We agree that everybody in school looks after you exceptionally well, especially those of you who have difficulties from time to time. We were impressed with your very good behaviour and your exceptionally clear understanding and knowledge of how to keep healthy. We were pleased to see that you understand how important it is to come to school regularly. We could see that you get on with each other remarkably well and help the school to run smoothly.

Your headteacher and other staff know that there is still work to be done to make the school even better. We have asked the school to do something to make sure that this happens.

- It should make sure that in lessons all teachers give you plenty of time to do your own work and to make sure that you always understand your success criteria. For the youngest children it should make sure that adults take more time to help support them in their play.

We hope that you will all continue to enjoy coming to school and try your hardest to do your very best all the time so that you are even more successful in the future.

Yours sincerely

Barbara Atcheson
Lead inspector

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