

Rockcliffe First School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	108583
Local authority	North Tyneside
Inspection number	377777
Inspection dates	12–13 December 2011
Reporting inspector	Frank Cain

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	3–9
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	239
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Elizabeth Hawksworth
Headteacher	Sharron Colpitts-Elliott
Date of previous school inspection	13 February 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. Inspectors visited 15 lessons or part-lessons taught by 10 teachers. Discussions took place with members of the governing body, staff and groups of pupils. Inspectors looked at a range of documents, including policies relating to safeguarding, the school's improvement plan and self-evaluation records, minutes of governing body meetings and the school's own assessment data. They also scrutinised pupils' work. Inspectors analysed questionnaires from pupils and staff as well as those from 105 parents and carers.

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

- Pupils' attainment and how much progress they make across the school.
- Whether the school's curriculum is outstanding, as the school judges it to be.
- Are teaching and learning improving pupil progress effectively and are pupils being helped to overcome barriers to learning?
- How leadership and management have developed since the previous inspection.
- Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage.

Information about the school

This is an average-sized primary school. It has a slightly lower proportion of girls than found nationally. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is well-below average. The percentage of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is well-below that usually seen. Most pupils are of White British heritage. A small percentage is from minority ethnic groups and a few speak English as an additional language. The school has the Basic Skills Quality Mark and the Artsmark Gold award.

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

1

Main findings

Rockcliffe is an outstanding school. Children start the Early Years Foundation Stage with levels of development that are generally typical for their age. Attainment is consistently high by the end of Year 4 and this means that all groups of pupils make excellent progress across the school and achieve outstandingly well from their starting points.

Pupils feel very safe in school partly because of the good site security. Pupils in the playground point to the high numbers of staff on duty and comment that they always have someone to turn to, including older pupils who act as 'buddies'. Pupils develop very good workplace skills, as their basic skills in literacy and numeracy are exceptionally well developed and attendance is above average. The school encourages pupils to take on responsibility. For example, pupils in Year 4 were given an input into the school's anti bullying policy. Behaviour is good in school and, as a result, the vast majority of pupils learn exceedingly well. The social, moral, spiritual and cultural development of pupils is excellent. Pupils demonstrate that they have a strong sense of the consequences to which their actions may lead. They show excitement and amazement in science and the pupils' wide understanding of different cultures is demonstrated in their outstanding artwork throughout the school. Moreover, pupils work very well together in groups.

The excellent care, guidance and support given to pupils ensure that all, including those whose circumstances make them vulnerable, reach their potential. Most pupils become very articulate and confident learners as a result. Pupils say that all staff care for them and in assembly all chanted the mantra 'Every day is kindness day'.

The curriculum is extremely well matched to the needs of all pupils so that they make outstanding progress. The school's excellent partnerships with outside agencies have helped them to extend their curriculum in sports, in particular, as well as helping to give extremely good support to pupils who speak English as an additional language. The quality of teaching is good and there are examples of outstanding practice, but at times some tasks prevent pupils from having enough opportunity to work independently and find things out for themselves. Occasionally, teachers talk for too long and the balance of teacher input and pupil activity slows pupils' progress.

The impact of leaders and managers on school development is outstanding, because they are continuously evaluating the effectiveness of their initiatives on pupil outcomes. The governing body is exceptionally well informed about school performance, including any areas of potential weakness, and provides excellent challenge as well as support. The headteacher's drive and vision have had a major impact on school improvements: areas previously identified as weaknesses, attendance and writing, for example, have been tackled successfully. This demonstrates that the school has an outstanding capacity for sustained improvement. Support for the school from parents and carers is exceptionally high and several comment that the school helps their children to thrive in what they describe 'a warm, friendly environment'. Nursery and Reception give children an excellent start to school. Leadership is outstanding and pupils make outstanding progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the amount of outstanding teaching by:
 - reducing the amount of time teachers spend talking to the whole class in order to give pupils more opportunities to develop their own understanding
 - ensuring lesson planning builds in more opportunities for pupils to engage in independent work that challenges their thinking.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

1

Outstanding achievement and a high degree of pupils' enjoyment in learning have helped create a very successful school. As one parent commented, 'My son goes to school with a smile on his face'. In lessons, pupils are keen and work well because they are happy, secure and confident. In a science lesson, for example, pupils were digging up objects buried some months earlier in the school garden and seeing with wonder how some objects had decayed while others had not. Very good support from teachers engages and enthuse pupils in most lessons and, as a result, they develop exceptional attitudes to learning. All pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, make excellent progress overall and attainment is significantly higher than the national average by the end of Year 4.

Pupils feel exceptionally safe in school and their knowledge about what constitutes safe practice when using computers is exceptionally well developed. Pupils are friendly and helpful to each other as they move around the school. Behaviour is good. There are very few recorded incidents of poor behaviour and most pupils engage well in lessons. Pupils are closely involved with their school community and links to the wider community are strengthening. Most pupils have a good understanding of how to stay healthy, and their take-up of extra-curricular sports events in the school, as well as of the extremely popular 'glee club' where they sing and dance, is high. Attendance is now consistently above average and improving. A popular 'my money' week helps older pupils to understand how to deal with finance and raise money for charity. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent. They work together very harmoniously and show they care for others,

including adults. Their cultural development is a very strong element, demonstrated by their extensive participation in the town’s annual lantern festival.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

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

How effective is the provision?

The quality of teaching is consistently good and at times inspirational. Tasks are well structured and teachers match work to pupils’ abilities well. Staff have high expectations of their pupils and, as a result, much of the work in pupils’ books is of outstanding quality. The balance of teacher input and pupil activity, however, does not always give enough opportunity for pupils to work independently, to ensure that pupils develop their research skills and even more self-reliance in learning.

The curriculum is excellent and the many imaginative experiences given to pupils are important factors in improving both their personal and academic outcomes. Visits to the Roman site at Segedunum and an unexpected school visitor in the guise of a Roman centurion provide excellent opportunities for creative follow-up work. Art is particularly well developed and Year 3 silk paintings showing Cullercoats fishing celebrate the local culture extremely well. Information and communication technology is used very effectively by pupils to design calendars and to make doll figures from recycled materials.

The effectiveness of care, guidance and support is outstanding. Excellent leadership of special educational needs means that the needs of all pupils, including those whose circumstances make them the most vulnerable are exceptionally well met. Planning for pupils’ transfer to the next stage in their education is most thorough, particularly for vulnerable pupils, and some pupils benefit through the Whitley Bay partnership, which supports pupils who speak English as an additional language. This promotes their progress exceptionally well.

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

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 outstanding leadership of the headteacher ensures that the talents of all staff are recognised and developed for the benefit of the pupils; pupils' attainment has remained high and their progress has been excellent for several years. All staff share the ambitions and enthusiasm of the headteacher. As a result, there is a proven track record in improving attendance and promoting pupils' writing skills. The school is exceedingly good at tackling discrimination and promoting equality of opportunity. They ensure that all pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those who speak English as an additional language, are extremely well supported and make outstanding progress.

Members of the governing body are highly visible in school. They visit lessons and many are linked to specific classes. Members of the governing body have a first-rate understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school, which enables them to challenge its work and help shape its educational direction.

Safeguarding procedures are good. Particular care is taken to ensure safe recruitment of staff and all visitors are carefully screened before they can gain entry. The site, as a result, is felt to be very safe by children. Safeguarding is threaded through the curriculum, so that pupils have a good understanding of what constitutes safe and unsafe situations.

The school promotes community cohesion well. It has a good understanding of its own context as a mainly White British school and so it gives children rich experiences of different cultures. The school is a very cohesive community, but the evaluation of the impact of its community cohesion action plan on pupils' outcomes is slightly less well developed. The school has extremely positive relationships with parents and carers. A very large majority expressed the view that they are well informed about their children's progress and how to support their learning. They receive accurate and up-to-date information on the curriculum their children are following, and on the progress they are making.

These are the grades for the 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	1
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	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	1

Early Years Foundation Stage

Their progress over a considerable period of time makes the outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage consistently outstanding. Children feel exceptionally safe and are confident when expressing themselves to adults. Children display excellent literacy skills. For example, children in Reception can name squares, circles and triangles with accuracy. Another child in Reception was able to spell a difficult three-syllable word accurately and without hesitation.

The leadership of the Early Years Foundation Stage is outstanding because there is continuous ongoing evaluation of outcomes and provision. Leaders recognise, for example, that aspects of outdoor learning and also children’s ‘learning journeys’, need to be developed further. Teachers’ files show very rigorous assessment procedures and there are highly effective partnerships with parents and carers. Questionnaires returned, for example, show high satisfaction with the setting and gratitude for its excellent work to promote children’s personal and academic development.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation stage	1
Taking into account:	1
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	
The effectiveness of leadership and management in the Early Years Foundation Stage	1

Views of parents and carers

The support of parents and carers for the school is exceedingly strong, with very few raising any concerns. Their comments on their children’s safety, in particular, were particularly positive. As one return highlighted, ‘Our children feel safe, happy and full of enthusiasm.’ The vast majority feel well informed about their children’s progress and comment, ‘The staff go out of their way to keep us informed.’

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Rockcliffe First 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 105 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 239 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	83	79	19	18	1	1	1	1
The school keeps my child safe	97	92	7	7	0	0	1	1
The school informs me about my child's progress	76	72	24	23	3	3	1	1
My child is making enough progress at this school	78	74	24	23	2	2	1	1
The teaching is good at this school	89	85	14	13	1	1	1	1
The school helps me to support my child's learning	69	66	33	31	1	1	1	1
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	74	70	28	27	1	1	1	1
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)	76	72	24	23	0	0	1	1
The school meets my child's particular needs	74	70	26	25	2	2	1	1
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	59	56	41	39	1	1	1	1
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	66	63	32	30	1	1	1	1
The school is led and managed effectively	79	75	25	24	0	0	1	1
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	84	80	17	16	1	1	1	1

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 is 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.



14 December 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Rockcliffe First School, Whitley Bay, NE26 2NR

I want to thank all of you for the extremely friendly welcome that you gave us when we inspected your school. We found the time we spent talking to you, your teachers and other adults extremely enjoyable and rewarding. You go to an outstanding school.

You make excellent progress and reach high standards because you work hard and receive good teaching. You are very well prepared for the future.

Your school is extremely well led and managed and all staff, including the governors, do all they can to help your learning. Most of you feel very safe and secure and think the school's curriculum gives you exciting learning experiences. Only a very tiny number of you said you had problems at school.

In order to help you to do even better and to improve the school further, we have asked the school's leaders, teachers and governors to:

- give you more time in lessons to do your work by cutting down on some of the time teachers take to explain things
- give you more tasks that will allow you to develop your own ideas.

I am sure you will all want to help make your school even better by continuing to work hard and playing together well.

Yours sincerely

Frank Cain
Lead inspector

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