

Rowans Primary School

Inspection report

Unique reference number	117257
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	379379
Inspection dates	14–15 May 2012
Lead inspector	Jackie Cousins

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	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	193
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Lisa Woodrow
Headteacher	Teresa Skeggs
Date of previous school inspection	30 June 2008
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Age group	3–11
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Introduction

Inspection team

Jackie Cousins

Additional Inspector

Bimla Thakur

Additional Inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. Inspectors visited 16 lessons or part lessons and observed all eight teachers who were teaching during the inspection. They met with staff, groups of pupils and members of the governing body. Inspectors observed the school's work, including hearing some children read and looked at school development plans, pupils' work in books, records of pupils' progress, policies, minutes of meetings, the school's self-evaluation documents. They received and analysed questionnaires from 89 parents and carers, as well as surveys from pupils and staff.

Information about the school

This school is smaller than the average-sized primary. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is above the national average. The percentage of disabled pupils and pupils who have special educational needs, including those who are supported by school action plus or have a statement of special educational needs, is above average. A few pupils who attend the school are looked after children. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds is above average, and a few speak English as an additional language. A significant proportion of children join the school part way through the taught year or key stage. The school meets the government floor standards which set the minimum expectations for attainment and progress.

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	2
Leadership and management	2

Key findings

- This is a good school. It is not yet outstanding because of inconsistencies in pupils' achievement and attendance. The very large majority of parents and carers who responded to the questionnaire said they would recommend this school.
- The secret of the school's success is the way that it promotes pupils' basic skills as well as their personal development. As a result, their behaviour, safety and attitudes to learning are good. Although attendance is average, one or two pupils have too much time away from school. Few rewards are given for individual attendance. Pupils from all backgrounds and abilities are quickly involved productively into school life, whenever they arrive, because of good leadership and very good care from staff.
- Pupils achieve well from their starting points and attainment in Year 6 is above average in reading, writing and mathematics. Since the last inspection, attainment has risen considerably for all pupils by Year 6. Sometimes the teaching of reading does not ensure that pupils' attainment is average by Year 2 because sessions can be a little uninspiring.
- Teaching is good and so the majority of pupils make good progress. The leadership of teaching is good and so teachers use a wide range of open-ended questions to engage pupils. Occasionally, pupils are not fully aware of which learning objectives in lessons will enable them to move to a higher level of skill.
- The leadership of the headteacher is forward thinking and she is very good at motivating her committed senior leadership team and staff. Performance management is used well to improve the school. Pupils' attainment, including that of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs, is monitored thoughtfully by the governing body and senior leaders. Some of the targets in individual education plans are rather broad and so a few pupils with additional needs are not clear about how their success will be measured.

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What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise achievement from good to outstanding by ensuring that:
 - consistent use is made of learning objectives which are highly specific so that all pupils can evaluate their success in detail
 - the teaching of reading in Year 1 and 2 is inspiring so that attainment is at least average
 - targets for disabled pupils and those with special educational needs always make it easy for them to measure their achievements.

- Raise attendance to above average by making sure pupils receive more individual rewards for high levels of attendance each month.

Main report

Achievement of pupils

The very large majority of parents and carers who responded to the questionnaire said their children are making good progress. Pupils achieve well from their starting points. As a result, attainment is above average by the end of Year 6. Pupils who join the school part way through a taught year or key stage achieve equally well as others at the school. Those who speak English as an additional language make good progress.

Children start school with skills which are below those expected for their age. They make good progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage and so their knowledge and development are average overall by the start of Year 1. They are higher in numeracy and knowledge and understanding of the world. This is because teachers use fascinating resources to interest children. In a good lesson observed in Nursery, pupils learned to say what a chick needs to grow because of the teacher's high expectations and use of real animals to focus learning.

Pupils' achieve well in reading in the Early Years Foundation Stage and in Years 3 to 6. Attainment in reading in Year 2 is not average because one or two less able readers make slower progress in learning to combine letter sounds. However, in the present Year 6, reading standards are above average. For example, currently over half of Year 6 pupils are working above age-related expectations in reading.

Pupils, including those who are more able, progress well in learning to communicate. Work in books demonstrates that pupils in Year 6 use adjectives and connectives successfully when, for example, they write a spooky story with atmosphere. The pupils' oral skills develop well because challenging activities ensure that they understand and use vocabulary effectively. In an outstanding lesson observed, Year 6 pupils very ably explained why the space race was particularly important in the

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1960s. The lesson was successful because information and communication technology (ICT) and questioning were used superbly.

Boys' and girls' achievement in mathematics is good. In an outstanding lesson seen in Year 4, pupils learned to use and apply their skills when they were challenged to create a line graph which plotted times accurately. This assisted pupils to solve a challenge extremely astutely. Also pupils in Year 5 develop their mathematical skills well. In a good lesson observed, they learnt about probability and how to predict the likelihood of drawing a particular card from a set of cards because effective teaching methods were used.

Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make similarly good progress. This is because individual and small-group intervention programmes allow pupils to improve their key skills successfully. Individual education plans are used effectively to support pupils' learning but targets are, on occasion, a little non-specific and not easy for pupils to measure their successes against. The school works well with other agencies to support pupils with additional needs and those who are looked after children.

Quality of teaching

Teachers use ICT creatively and so pupils enjoy learning about many varied topics. For example, a teacher captured Year 4 pupils' interest in a lesson because she used technology to bring learning to life when the pupils watched a film before they undertook a challenge about people's movements. This meant that pupils learned to analyse data and use graphs very thoroughly to solve a mystery. Teachers show pupils how to use certain skills successfully and this means, for example, pupils in Year 6 learned to use shading effectively when they sketched a member of the royal family. Occasionally, one or two pupils are not fully aware of the ways that they can show that they are working at a higher level of attainment because learning objectives are too broad. The teaching of reading is good in the Early Years Foundation Stage and in Years 3 to 6 and so pupils comprehension skills are well developed. However, it does not always motivate pupils in Years 1 and 2 to read words accurately and quickly. The very large majority of parents and carers who sent in a questionnaire said that their children are well taught.

Assessment is used effectively to plan lessons for different groups. This means that pupils, including disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs, are challenged successfully by teachers. All pupils who answered the questionnaire said the school staff help them to do as well as they can. Pupils are rigorously involved in the assessment of their own and other's work. For example, they comment thoughtfully about what they consider is good about a friend's writing. Teachers' marking is detailed and assists pupils to improve their work well.

Pupils learn to be self-sufficient because of teachers' high expectations. They learn to debate moral issues such as 'Is it graffiti or art?' due to good levels of guidance. Their spiritual development is thoughtfully supported by all staff. This ensures pupils

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learn to reflect on their feelings intelligently. Their multi-cultural awareness is effectively established. For example, they learn about other countries and cultures when they study projects linked to India and Africa.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Virtually all pupils, parents and carers who responded to the questionnaire agreed that behaviour is good and that children are safe in school. Pupils feel safe because staff manage occasional incidents of challenging behaviour calmly and firmly. Pupils are very polite and friendly to one another. The younger pupils said that everyone gets on well together and this promotes good behaviour and social development. In recent years, very few pupils have been excluded. Pupils understand clearly the types of cyber-bullying and know, for instance, that they should not go on certain websites or say nasty things on the internet. Bullying incidents are very rare.

Pupils' attitudes to learning are good because the staff are keen to challenge the pupils through interesting practical activities. For example, in one lesson in Year 5, virtually all pupils keenly answered the teachers' questions as they composed newspaper headlines from various pieces for texts. Pupils' views are shared successfully through the school council and so they were involved in drawing up suggestions on how to improve attendance. Pupils' attendance has improved recently and is average and their punctuality is sound but, on occasions, it can be a little bit erratic.

Leadership and management

The work of the headteacher, deputy headteacher and senior teacher is strongly focused on the school's priorities for development. Since the last inspection, the curriculum has been developed significantly. This means that pupils' needs are met productively because creative projects are well planned and these ensure pupils' skills are promoted in several areas of learning simultaneously. For instance, pupils very much enjoyed a topic about the British monarchy because of the wide range of skills being taught at one time such as history and art. Key skills of communication, literacy, numeracy, ICT and science are promoted effectively and so pupils are well prepared for the next stage of education. The quality of teaching has been improved through perceptive use of continuous professional development and performance management. All staff who responded to the questionnaire said they were proud to be a member of staff and that leaders do all they can to improve teaching. Staff and leaders at all levels make efficient use of self-evaluation. As a result, the school has a strong capacity to continue to improve.

The governing body has enhanced its role by ensuring monitoring activities are more rigorous. It challenges school leaders regularly through sensitive questions about the quality of education. The encouragement of equal opportunities is managed well and discrimination is not accepted. All pupils are fully included in school activities. The pupils' attainment is monitored carefully by all levels of leadership and staff. Attendance and punctuality are monitored thoroughly but few rewards are given to

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individual pupils for high levels of attendance. The governing body and senior leaders ensure that pupils are safeguarded well. For example, many staff have up-to-date first-aid qualifications, risk assessments are used efficiently, all employment checks are carried out and recorded correctly, and child-protection training and policies are regularly updated.

The school's leaders engage fruitfully with parents and carers. Nearly all those who returned the questionnaire agreed that the school responds well to their concerns. One parent summed up their thoughts in commenting, 'Staff always listen to my concerns and get back to me. My son is very happy at the school and I could not wish for more.' The school promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development successfully. For example, it enhances effectively pupils' personal, social and emotional development through displays and assembly times.

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	54	42	2	2
Primary schools	14	49	32	6
Secondary schools	20	39	34	7
Special schools	33	45	20	3
Pupil referral units	9	55	28	8
All schools	16	47	31	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 to 31 December 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.
Floor standards:	the national minimum expectation of attainment and progression measures.
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.

16 May 2012

Dear Pupils



Inspection of Rowans Primary School, Welwyn Garden City, AL7 1NZ

Thank you for helping us to find out about your school. It was a great pleasure to speak to some of you and to hear your thoughts and suggestions. Your school provides you with a good education. You told us that you enjoy school, where you all get on well together, and we agree. These are some of the best things about your school.

- Your attainment by Year 6 is above average and you make good progress.
- You behave well in school because staff guide you thoughtfully.
- You feel safe in school because staff manage you firmly and calmly.
- You said how much you enjoy the projects you study, such as one on the Diamond Jubilee and royalty, which is teaching you many skills at the same time.
- You are taught well and staff work hard to tell you how well you are doing in their marking.
- Nearly all of you told us in your answers on the questionnaire that teachers are interested in your ideas.
- You told us how proud you are of the fact that staff work hard to help you.
- The school staff have established a strong partnership with your parents and carers.

Your headteacher and senior teachers have good ideas about how to improve the school and so we have asked them to make things even better by:

- raising your achievement to even higher levels by ensuring even more of you make the progress expected every year
- making sure that reading sessions are more exciting in Year 1 and 2
- ensuring your teachers highlight what the most important things are for you to do in each lesson so that you work at even higher levels
- supporting you to come to school even more regularly.

Continue to listen carefully to your teachers' comments, come to school every day and enjoy all the super things you are learning at Rowans Primary School.

Yours sincerely
Jackie Cousins
Lead inspector

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