

Rainford C of E Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	104790
Local authority	St Helens
Inspection number	377128
Inspection dates	10–11 May 2012
Lead inspector	Sarah Drake

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	296
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Allan Jones
Headteacher	Julian Finn
Date of previous school inspection	2 July 2009
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Introduction

Inspection team

Sarah Drake
Clare Henderson
Desmond Stubbs

Additional inspector
Additional inspector
Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. The inspectors observed teaching and learning in 22 lessons taught by 14 different teachers, including a series of guided reading sessions and sessions to promote pupils' understanding of the links between letters and sounds. They held meetings with two groups of pupils, members of school staff, members of the governing body, and a small group of parents and carers. The inspectors observed the school's work and looked at a range of documentation relating to leadership, management and pupils' progress including tracking data, pupils' work, school self-evaluation, policies, safeguarding information and development planning. They also took into account the responses to the inspection questionnaires made by pupils, staff and 158 parents and carers.

Information about the school

Rainford C of E is larger than the average-sized primary school. Almost all pupils are White British and very few speak English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals is low, as is the proportion of pupils who are supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs. The school meets the current floor standard expected by the government for pupils' attainment and progress in English and mathematics. It holds the Active School and Healthy Eating awards and Forest School status. Since the previous inspection the numbers on roll have risen by 15%. The school operates an out-of-school club for pupils who attend the school. The deputy headteacher joined the school in January 2012, one term after the retirement of the previous deputy headteacher.

The school shares its site with a satellite of a children's centre. This did not form part of this inspection but, once it has been inspected, a report of its quality will 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	2
Achievement of pupils	2
Quality of teaching	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils	1
Leadership and management	2

Key Findings

- This is a good school. It is not yet outstanding because pupils are capable of making more rapid progress and there is room for leaders to increase the rigour with which they evaluate and drive forward improvements. Parents and carers are highly appreciative of the way in which the school supports their children's individual needs and talents. Many simply, and tellingly, commented, 'My child loves school.'
- Pupils achieve well. Children's skills on entry to Reception are usually broadly as expected for their age and, by the end of Year 6, attainment in English and mathematics is generally above average. This represents good progress. Pupils are keen learners, relish a challenge and take pride in the presentation of their work.
- Teaching is of good quality throughout the school and sometimes better than this. The quality of relationships is a significant strength which means that pupils feel confident to volunteer ideas or to say if they do not understand something. Teachers plan interesting activities and organise them well. They do not always offer pupils enough challenge nor, when marking pupils' work, give enough guidance on how to improve it.
- Pupils are outstandingly well behaved and have an excellent awareness of how to keep themselves safe. They greatly enjoy school, treat others with respect and tolerance, and describe the school as, 'kind, caring and friendly'.
- Good leadership has sustained the school's good quality since the previous inspection and, using effective performance management, introduced a range of improvements including to the quality of teaching. The systems for tracking pupils' progress and evaluating the impact of actions taken are not yet fully used to best effect. The school promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development exceptionally well. This is why, in the words of one parent, 'It is a very happy school where children blossom in confidence and ability.'

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the proportion of pupils of all ages who make outstanding progress, by:
 - ensuring staff provide all pupils with enough challenge
 - making better use of targets and marking, especially in mathematics
 - making every effort to ensure that all groups of pupils have equal access to suitable accommodation.
- Increase the rigour with which leaders at all levels evaluate the school's provision and drive forward improvement, by:
 - improving the systems for tracking pupils' progress
 - using the information with precision to provide challenge in school development planning
 - increasing middle managers' role in monitoring the quality of provision and pupils' progress in their areas of responsibility.

Main Report

Achievement of pupils

The comments of many pupils that, 'lessons are fun' confirm the very positive attitudes to learning that underpin their good achievement. Pupils settle very well at the start of lessons and sustain their interest and concentration throughout. They work exceptionally well in pairs and small groups, organising, problem-solving, listening to and negotiating with each other to move their learning forward. Pupils take care with the presentation of their work and they reflect on their learning, whether this relates to the emotions evoked by listening to music or to the likely accuracy of an answer reached in mathematics. Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs demonstrate similarly positive attitudes and effort due to well-targeted adult support. This means that they make good progress alongside their peers. Pupils of all ages and abilities enjoy reading. Younger pupils competently use their knowledge of the links between letters and sounds to help them decipher new words, and older pupils can maturely explain their reading preferences and analyse different techniques used by authors. The reading skills of pupils by the end of Year 2 are above average and by the end of Year 6 they are well above average.

Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage build well on the skills with which they join Reception. In the supportive environment they settle well and are happy to initiate their own games, for example, in Percy the Park-keeper's Hut or the Garden Centre. They listen to and follow instructions well and are eager to experiment, for example to see whether magnets stick to metal objects. Their skill development exceeds expectations by the time they join Year 1. Older pupils use their literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology skills well across a range of subjects, for example, when writing about the Victorian match girls' strike or creating graphs in science. They assess each other's work supportively and applaud their achievements. Pupils strive to do well and they know their writing targets but they are not always clear about what they need to do to improve their work. Pupils' progress is good, but not consistently rapid, throughout the school. By the end of Year 6 the attainment of many in English and mathematics is above average and some produce work of exceptionally high quality. Almost all parents and carers consider that the school meets their children's needs well and that they make good progress.

Quality of teaching

All pupils and almost all parents and carers consider that the teaching is good. Teachers consistently clarify the lesson's learning objective to pupils, ensure that it builds logically on their prior learning, and provide time at the end of lessons for pupils to confirm what they have learnt and to express any uncertainties. Lessons are often practical and move at a brisk pace, which helps to sustain pupils' focus on the task in hand. Warm-up activities, such as quick-fire coordinates bingo to introduce a mathematics session, help pupils, as they say, 'to get our brains in gear'. Excellent relationships, paired work and much use of praise create a positive environment for learning and make a strong contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Teachers pay good attention to ensuring that they and the pupils pronounce words clearly, promoting accuracy in pupils' reading and spelling. They use subject-specific language such as 'numerator' or 'rhetorical questions' well so that pupils become confident about their meaning.

Teachers generally identify the expectations of different groups and in some lessons provide excellent levels of challenge for all. For example, in a Year 6 mathematics lesson the teacher's outstanding analysis of each pupil's difficulties and success, combined with probing but supportive questioning, meant those of different abilities gained great confidence and made exceptional progress in their ability to convert fractions to decimals and vice versa. Sometimes, all pupils have to complete the same task, which offers little challenge to those who have already grasped a concept, or pupils have to listen for too long before they get down to written work. Teaching assistants support disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs well, providing well-tailored activities that enable them to make good progress. In the Early Years Foundation Stage, teaching assistants do not always make the most of opportunities to extend children's learning through questioning during their self-chosen activities.

Pupils have targets in their extended writing books and, introduced very recently, for guided reading, but not for mathematics. Marking is generally more informative in pupils' literacy books than their numeracy books. It is often celebratory but provides few pointers for improvement or reference to pupils' targets, and these are not always changed often enough. Year 6 pupils are very clear about where they need to improve but elsewhere too many pupils have a hazy view of what they need to work on next in order to improve their work.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Scrutiny of school records confirms that the largely positive views held by parents, carers and pupils about pupils' behaviour and safety are well-founded. Pupils' excellent behaviour starts in the Early Years Foundation Stage where they learn about fairness and the importance of acting in a safe, sensible and thoughtful manner. From an early age, those whose behaviour can be challenging are helped to consider their own and others' needs and to learn strategies, such as taking a deep breath, to calm themselves. Typically, pupils show respect for others and are eager to offer help. They are keen charitable fundraisers and make a very strong contribution to school life through, for example, the suggestions of the school council and carrying out risk assessments to identify potential hazards. Older pupils take excellent care of younger ones. Newcomers to the school comment on other pupils' warm welcome and kindness. Pupils have a mature awareness of different types of bullying, such as name-calling, cyber-bullying and racism, and are confident that any concerns are

listened to and acted upon. They know that telling lies is wrong and they willingly reflect on their actions. Boys and girls work and play together companionably and are accepting of those who are different. They are out-going and extremely appreciative of all aspects of school life, including the, 'delicious food' and that staff, 'always try to make you feel comfortable'. Attendance is consistently above average. The school operates as a very calm and happy learning community in which pupils' outstanding attitudes make an exceptional contribution to their own learning.

Leadership and management

All staff share the clear vision of the headteacher and other leaders, which places pupils' best interests at the centre of all decision-making. Staff have good access to professional development, often in collaboration with other local schools, which has, for example, enabled them to take on with confidence recent changes to the teaching of reading and the links between letters and sounds. The headteacher conducts observations of teaching and learning and meets with teachers to discuss pupils' progress. It is only recently that the deputy headteacher has participated in such management of performance and, as yet, this does not involve subject leaders. This means that they are not sufficiently responsible or accountable for pupils' progress in their areas. The tracking systems record pupils' progress satisfactorily and provide the school with enough information to build an accurate overview of its strengths and areas for development. They are not yet sufficiently well-refined and efficient to ensure that the school takes prompt action to promote even better pupil progress. School development planning identifies clear success criteria but these are not challenging enough to raise expectations of pupils' achievement. The school has sustained its good quality provision over time, but it does not yet analyse and evaluate the impact of its actions with enough rigour to drive forward improvement at a faster rate.

Members of the governing body offer the school good levels of challenge as well as support. Safeguarding arrangements meet requirements. The school successfully promotes tolerance and ensures that different groups of pupils make equal progress. However, with the recent growth in numbers, some groups of pupils have their literacy and numeracy lessons in the hall, the information and communication technology suite or a room shared with the children's centre which, despite teachers' best efforts, is far from ideal. The good quality curriculum offers pupils a well-planned range of interesting activities that promotes their academic development well and their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development exceptionally well. Children in Reception enjoy a good balance of adult-led and self-chosen activities, including those based on the Forest School programme. Residential visits for pupils from Year 2 upwards, musical tuition and many visitors bring pupils' learning to life and foster their enjoyment. The well-organised out-of-school club provides a good range of activities that pupils thoroughly enjoy. Partnership with parents and carers greatly enhances the school's provision through their fundraising for equipment, their volunteering in school and their support for their children's homework.

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.



14 May 2012

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Rainford CofE Primary School, St Helen's, WA11 8AJ

Thank you for the very warm welcome that you gave to the inspectors when we visited your school recently. We enjoyed our time at Rainford and were particularly pleased to see how well you get on with each other and how much you enjoy learning. Your behaviour is excellent and helps to create a very happy environment – congratulations!

Yours is a good school where the teaching helps you to make good progress. Children in Reception get off to a good start so they are ready to learn in more formal surroundings by the time they join Year 1. By the end of Year 6 many of you attain above the national average in reading, writing and mathematics. This is good but we think that you could make even better progress. We have asked the school's leaders to make sure that all teachers provide you with the right levels of challenge and, particularly in mathematics, help you to understand more clearly what you need to do to improve your work.

The leaders and other staff know you very well as individuals and make you feel very safe and well supported. They are very successful in helping you to grow in self-confidence and in your understanding about the importance of treating each other with respect. They regularly make improvements to the provision but do not yet have enough, easily accessible, information about your progress to guide their decision-making. We have asked them to try to link all the information together more closely because we think this will help them to be even clearer about what works well and what needs to be improved.

We hope that you continue to attend school as regularly and to make as much effort with your learning as you do now. This letter comes with our best wishes for the future.

Yours sincerely

Sarah Drake
Lead inspector

