

Rowley Hall Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	103955
Local Authority	Sandwell
Inspection number	336204
Inspection dates	18–19 March 2010
Reporting inspector	Selwyn Ward

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	0–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	426
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	John Tossell
Headteacher	Lynda Townsend
Date of previous school inspection	19 September 2006
School address	Windsor Road Rowley Regis West Midlands
Telephone number	0121 559 1400
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Age group	0–11
Inspection dates	18–19 March 2010
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**Number of children on roll in the registered
childcare provision****Date of last inspection of registered
childcare provision**

Not previously inspected

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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by four additional inspectors who visited 25 lessons and observed 16 teachers. They held meetings with governors, staff and groups of pupils, and also spoke to parents. They looked at samples of pupils' work, the tracking of pupils' progress, school policies and procedures, school leaders' monitoring, school improvement planning, risk assessments, the minutes of governing body meetings and questionnaires received from pupils, staff and 107 parents and carers.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following:

- the reasons for any variation in the progress of boys and girls of different abilities, including the more able, vulnerable pupils and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities
- the impact that governors and leaders at all levels have on provision and outcomes for the pupils.

Information about the school

This school is larger than average. The great majority of the pupils are from White British backgrounds, with others coming from a range of different minority ethnic groups. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is above average.

The school has had several changes of teaching staff since the last inspection. The school has achieved Artsmark, Activemark, Basic Skills Quality Mark, Investors in People and Leading Parent Partnership awards. It also has a local authority environmental award and an anti-bullying award.

Rowley Hall offers an extended school day and childcare facilities at Rowley Owls for children from the age of six months. Additional extended services are offered by the neighbouring children's centre, which is independently managed and is separately inspected.

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?

3

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

Pupils enjoy school because they are looked after well, and they know that the school is a safe and fun place to be. Pupils are well motivated because the curriculum is interesting and exciting. The many trips and other enrichment activities help to bring the curriculum to life. For example, Year 2 pupils and their teachers were all dressed in Victorian garb for their trip to a museum. This added hugely to the pupils' sense of eager anticipation. As one of the many exceptionally appreciative parents explained, 'The children are always learning and are excited to continue that learning at home.' There have been many changes of teaching staff and that has proved a partial brake on the otherwise accelerating improvements. The children get off to a good start in Rowley Owls and the Early Years Foundation Stage. Pupils make good progress in many lessons, but their achievement overall is satisfactory rather than good because it is uneven through the school. This is due to the variation in the quality of teaching, which ranges from satisfactory to outstanding but is satisfactory overall.

In the best lessons teachers have high expectations of pupils. Teachers are particularly effective at questioning, pressing pupils to explain and expand upon their thinking. One feature that stands out in this school is the outstanding level of pupils' involvement in the school and wider community. Parents praise the good teaching and welcome the opportunities their children have to develop as confident young people. As one parent wrote, 'The school has encouraged my daughter to be independent; running their own school magazine and organising groups of children to work as a team.' Another described how, 'Great teachers and support staff have encouraged my daughter to be a "you can do it" child, which has helped her confidence no end.'

Teachers' marking helps pupils to move their learning on. Pupils are involved in evaluating their own and each other's work, and this is beginning to make them think more about their learning. However, pupils do not always routinely check their written work with sufficient care. Initiatives to improve the creativity of pupils' writing have enabled pupils to use increasingly imaginative adjectives and adverbs, but reminders of the basic rules of punctuation have proven less effective. Written work is still too often let down by pupils' forgetful approach to capital letters and full stops, or by unconventional spellings and careless spelling errors. In lessons where progress is uneven teachers do not challenge pupils enough, especially the more able. This is particularly evident in some science and topic work. Although teachers manage their classes well and behaviour is consistently good throughout the school, the attention of some pupils begins to drift when too long is allowed for tasks or when teachers' introductions are overly long. Nevertheless, the progress of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is good throughout the school. This is due in no

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small part to the well-targeted assistance that these pupils receive from learning support staff. These staff are very well deployed, often team teaching alongside the class teacher.

Leaders have a very sharp picture of how well the school is doing and of where further improvements are needed. They keep a careful track of each pupil's progress and, as a result, extra sessions are provided for pupils who need them. There is time at the end of every morning, for example, to boost the understanding of those pupils in Key Stage 2 who have not fully grasped a concept from that day's mathematics lesson. This is one of many improvements, and school leaders and governors can point to other key developments that have had a positive impact on pupils' progress. Leaders' success in securing improvements, and the overwhelming confidence that they have won from parents, together show the school's good capacity for continued improvement.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Build on the initiatives to promote improved writing throughout the school by:
 - - focusing on accurate spelling and punctuation
 - - ensuring that pupils routinely check their own spellings and punctuation.
- Match work in all lessons to pupils' different capabilities, so that more-able pupils are consistently stretched in all subjects, but particularly in science and topic work.
- Improve the pace of lessons so that introductions and activities do not go on for too long.
- About 40% of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**3**

Attainment, which was previously below average, rose after the last inspection. This improvement has been sustained so that standards are average in Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2. In lessons, pupils' progress varies. It is good in several classes, but this is not consistently the case across the school. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress, especially in English because of the high quality support they receive. More-able pupils do not always do as well as they should because, in some lessons, work is not challenging enough for them. These pupils coast when the work is too easy for them or when, as is commonly the case in science, all have similar tasks to complete in similar ways. This is reflected in the below average proportion of Year 6 pupils who do well for their age in the national tests in English and science.

Nonetheless, the school has developed work to extend pupils' thinking. Older pupils, in particular, are keen to offer their ideas on 'Think' questions that touch, for example, on philosophical issues such as whether a pound coin is valued more by a poor person than a rich one. It is activities such as this that have helped to ignite pupils' enthusiasm for learning. They have a clear understanding of the need for a healthy diet and regular

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exercise, and are keen to take part in sports and other extra-curricular sessions, including the regular homework clubs for Year 6 pupils to better prepare them for their coming national tests. The contribution of the pupils to the wider community is outstanding. For example, within the school some take on responsibilities as prefects and school councillors. Representatives of the school council regularly attend meetings of the governing body and their input ensures that its decisions take full account of pupils' views. They join in with enterprise schemes in the locality and have campaigned on safety issues, including lobbying the local authority for a 'lollipop' person for the road outside the school.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	3
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	3
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
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	3
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

The school's Artsmark and Activemark awards attest to the breadth of a curriculum that is based on practical and creative activities that stimulate pupils' interest and make learning fun. Pupils learn to take a keen interest in conservation and the environment. A great many also take part in the wide range of clubs on offer; much increased since the last inspection. Imaginative use is made of visits and visitors to the school to enliven the

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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curriculum and provide memorable learning experiences. Year 6 pupils, for example, talk excitedly about their visit to Bewdley Museum, linked to their study of the Second World War. They recall what they have learnt about evacuees in vivid detail because they had the first-hand experience of dressing for their trip in 1940's outfits and journeying, like evacuees, on a steam train.

The good relationships that teachers and other adults have with their pupils contribute to pupils' motivation to work hard and do their best. Classes are managed well and lessons are generally well planned, but work is not always matched closely enough to pupils' often widely different capabilities. Although teachers do not always point out pupils' careless spelling errors, their marking otherwise gives pupils very clear guidance on how to improve their work. This is consistent across the school, and a notable feature of assessment is that time is earmarked for pupils to read and respond to the teachers' comments. Pupils are involved in evaluating their own and each other's work but they are not, in every class, pressed routinely to check their spellings and punctuation.

Parents and carers appreciate the good arrangements for the care and welfare of their children. Medical needs are sensitively catered for, as are the needs of those pupils who find themselves in vulnerable circumstances and those who need extra help with their learning. A parent of a child with special educational needs wrote particularly to praise 'the hard work and dedication of staff'. Rowley Hall's extended school's provision includes breakfast and after-school clubs that are valued by parents and provide well for the pupils.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	3
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	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher, leadership team and governors have driven through a succession of improvements since the last inspection, raising the quality of provision and, through that, sustaining improved outcomes for the pupils. Leaders' monitoring gives them a detailed picture of what the school does well and where improvements are needed. Their observations of lessons, for example, are perceptive, and correctly identify how to further accelerate pupils' learning. Although there are still some inconsistencies in the progress made by pupils these are the result of disruptions arising from changes in teaching staff and are not due to a lack of rigour amongst school leaders. Teachers who are new to the school comment favourably on the support they have been given by

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members of the leadership team.

Governors visit regularly so that they are not just dependent on staff for information on what happens in the classroom. They take account of pupils' views, inviting the head boy and head girl to governing body meetings so that the school council's ideas and suggestions can be taken on board. Governors ensure that all statutory requirements are securely met, including those for pupils' welfare and safeguarding. They have evaluated, with school leaders, the school's contribution to community cohesion, although they have not recognised just how good it is. The school and its pupils together play a very active role in the local community, and this is reciprocated by local people and business people who come into school to support pupils' learning and broaden their experience of the wider world. Rowley Hall functions as a harmonious community where pupils from different backgrounds get on well together, and take a growing interest in learning about the different beliefs and ways of life in the United Kingdom and around the world.

Leaders carefully monitor the progress of different groups of pupils to identify variations in performance. For example, they correctly identified that boys had been achieving markedly less well than girls. Improvements were made, including curriculum changes and some one-to-one support, to better motivate boys and to boost their performance. These have had demonstrable success. Leaders' monitoring has identified that more able pupils are not always pushed enough, and they have made this a priority in their development planning. In mathematics, for example, more able pupils in Year 6 are now taught in an ability set with the aim of moving their learning forward at a faster rate.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
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	2
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
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	3

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Early Years Foundation Stage

The children who attend the daycare provision at Rowley Owls are supported well. This is because staff are well-informed and ensure that the children in their charge are secure and happy. Parents and carers are justifiably pleased that their children learn from highly committed adults in a bright and stimulating environment. In the Nursery and Reception classes, the children achieve well because the teaching is lively and well matched to individual learning needs. Children enjoy school, and each other's company. Smiles and laughter abound, as children find that learning is fun. Although most do not reach the nationally expected learning goals by the end of the Reception Year, and the language skills of some remain particularly weak, the children make good progress from their generally low starting points. Children's personal development is fostered especially well. As a result, most children quickly learn to follow the school's orderly routines, cooperate with each other and behave well. Parents and carers appreciate this. As one explained, 'My child settled into school very quickly when she started in September. This was due to the care that was shown to her by her teachers.'

In this well run provision, staff are skilled at assessing and meeting children's learning needs. They mostly ensure a well-judged balance between adult-led activities and those chosen by the children themselves. Occasionally, however, opportunities are missed for adults to intervene to make sure that children make the most of self-selected activities to further their learning.

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

The questionnaire responses from parents and carers were exceptionally positive. Parents and carers are very appreciative of all that the school provides for their children. Many reserve particular praise for the quality of care and for how approachable and responsive they find teachers and school leaders.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Rowley Hall Primary 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 107 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 426 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	66	62	41	38	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	67	63	40	37	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	52	49	53	50	2	2	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	59	55	46	43	1	1	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	62	58	44	41	1	1	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	62	58	44	41	1	1	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	59	55	45	42	3	3	0	0
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)	44	41	53	50	1	1	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	48	45	54	50	3	3	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	55	51	49	46	2	2	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	41	39	60	56	4	4	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	51	48	55	51	1	1	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	62	58	44	41	0	0	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 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 inspected between September 2007 and July 2008

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	39	58	3	0
Primary schools	13	50	33	4
Secondary schools	17	40	34	9
Sixth forms	18	43	37	2
Special schools	26	54	18	2
Pupil referral units	7	55	30	7
All schools	15	49	32	5

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 were reported in The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills 2007/08.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

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 pupil's 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.



22 March 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Rowley Hall Primary School, Rowley Regis, B65 9HU

Thank you for making us so welcome when inspectors came to visit your school. We were pleased to see how well behaved you are and how well you all get on together. This helps to make Rowley Hall such a happy, friendly place to be. We were especially impressed by how involved you are in the school and wider community. You are being really well prepared as young citizens.

There is much about your school that is good, including the start that the children get off to in Rowley Owls, the Nursery and Reception classes, the arrangements for your care and welfare, and the exciting activities you get to do. Many of you make good progress, including those of you who need extra help with your learning. We agree with the headteacher and the governors that you are not all making consistently good progress in every class. We have suggested ways of further boosting your progress so that it is consistently good throughout the school. In particular, we have asked your teachers to make sure that the work they give you always stretches your learning. We could see that, sometimes, work is too easy for some of you - especially in science and in topic work where everyone in the class is expected to do the same thing. We have also asked staff to make sure that they time activities carefully so that you are given just the right amount of time for practical tasks. We could also see that there are occasions when some children's attention drifts during long lesson introductions or when you are given too long to complete a task.

We were pleased to see how initiatives like 'Big Write' have improved your creative writing. You are certainly using lots of 'wow' words now. Some of you are still not taking enough care, however, to ensure that your spellings and punctuation are correct. We have asked your teachers to pay particular attention to this. It is something with which you can help too. We would like to see you all take time to check your written work carefully to make sure that your spellings are correct. This could make a real difference in raising the quality of your writing, not just in literacy but in other subjects too.

Our best wishes for the future.

Yours sincerely

Selwyn Ward

Lead inspector

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