



William Ransom Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 117314
LEA HERTFORDSHIRE LEA
Inspection number 280040
Inspection dates 14 June 2006 to 14 June 2006
Reporting inspector Ms. Tricia Pritchard HMI

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 which gives Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Schools the authority to inspect any school in England. The inspection is to be treated as a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Primary	School address	Stuart Drive
School category	Community		SG4 9QB
Age range of pupils	4 to 11		
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01462 624777
Number on roll	268	Fax number	01462 624888
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mr. Ian Albert
Date of previous inspection	4 December 2000	Headteacher	Mr. Paul Mulot

Age group	Inspection dates	Inspection number
4 to 11	14 June 2006 - 14 June 2006	280040

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors of Schools who held meetings with staff, pupils and governors, observed teaching, scrutinised a sample of pupils' work and read documentation, including the school's self evaluation and improvement plan.

Description of the school

The William Ransom School is an oversubscribed primary school. The vast majority of pupils start in reception and continue until the end of Year 6. Attendance is above the national average. Very few pupils are eligible for free school meals. The proportions of pupils with learning difficulties and with English as an additional language are below the national average.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

'The school gives each pupil the best start in their lives to achieve the best of their ability.' This view, expressed by a parent, sums up the overwhelming high praise parents have for the William Ransom School. It is an outstanding school. From the Foundation Stage to Year 6, pupils make excellent progress. They achieve very high standards in English, mathematics and science in comparison to pupils in other schools. Standards of writing throughout the school are exceptionally good. The teachers are highly skilled practitioners who know the pupils well. Relationships are excellent. An exemplary feature is the planning and organisation of the curriculum. Equality of opportunity is very well promoted during lessons and in the many extra-curricular activities which enrich the curriculum. Provision for music and sport is very strong. The school is rightly proud of the many national awards it wins for academic and sporting excellence. The leadership and management are outstanding. Standards were very good at the last inspection in 2000. The school has maintained these very high standards and sustained improvement through well focused self evaluation and improvement planning. Senior staff have improved outdoor resources for children in the Reception class and have plans to enhance this further. The school is very well placed to continue to improve even further.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

Standards are very high and have been for a number of years. Attainment on entry is above average. In the Foundation Stage, pupils make excellent progress, particularly with their writing. Soon after starting school, they are constructing sentences and expressing themselves fluently on paper as well as orally. This excellent practice is continued throughout the school so that standards of writing are exceptionally good in all classes. In particular, those with learning difficulties make very good progress. Throughout Years 1 and 2, the pupils make very good progress and achieve standards in reading, writing and mathematics that are consistently well above the national average. In 2005, girls achieved better results than boys but this is not a common trend. Pupils with English as an additional language did very well. Pupils between Years 3 and 6 make excellent progress. Standards are very high and in each of the last five years, the pupils' overall attainment has been significantly above the national mean. Girls and boys make equally very good progress. In 2005, they made outstanding progress in mathematics and the school is now in the top two percent of schools in England. A very large proportion of pupils attain level 5 in English, mathematics and science at the end of Year 6. Teachers' assessment of pupils is accurate and informs regular target-setting. Pupils' progress is tracked carefully. This excellent practice is a major contributor to the high standards achieved by pupils.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

'I cannot praise the school enough for producing well-educated and well-rounded pupils.' Parents recognise that the school instils a love for learning in their children. The pupils enjoy school and are highly articulate and polite. They are very enthusiastic and eager to take full advantage of the extensive opportunities to participate in academic, sporting and cultural pursuits. The pupils are proud that their school has won so many awards for academic and sporting excellence. They are quick to recognise and celebrate each other's successes. Behaviour is excellent both in lessons and at playtime. The pupils care well for one another; older pupils play happily with younger pupils. School council members are very good at representing and articulating the views of their peers. The pupils make very good progress in their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development because it is promoted in all aspects of school life. They are both confident and reflective learners. The school's philosophy that, 'Hard work equals reward,' is taken seriously. A parent comments rightly that, 'the children feed from the drive and respect found throughout the school.'

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 1

'The school has a great team of hard-working, dedicated staff.' Parents speak very highly of the quality of teaching. The school's outstanding standards are complemented by very good and excellent teaching. Teachers are well qualified, very skilled at planning learning to meet individual pupil's needs and interests, and are highly committed to seeking ways to improve their teaching even further. There is a clear focus on developing problem solving skills which is having a positive impact on pupils' progress in this area. The teachers' planning is very thorough and is informed by regular assessment of pupils' progress. Their subject knowledge is excellent. This is exemplified by the very high standards of writing throughout the school. Teachers understand how to encourage pupils to improve the quality of their writing. They are constantly giving pupils opportunities to practise their writing skills in other curriculum subjects, such as history, geography and science. Teachers know their pupils well and have high expectations of each pupil. They target their questioning effectively and lessons proceed at a very good pace. All classes are well equipped with interactive whiteboards and staff are competent at using them to support their teaching. Classrooms are well organised and colourful. In the Foundation Stage, the teaching is excellent.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

'As well as working hard on literacy and numeracy, my child has great fun at school.' The curriculum is very well planned to give pupils opportunities to excel and experience success in learning. Drama, music and sport feature prominently alongside the core

and foundation subjects. A strong emphasis is placed on celebrating religious and cultural diversity, and on establishing links with the community and feeder schools, for example, with Hitchin Girls' School for science and dance. Pupils have very good opportunities to prepare for the future world of work and develop their financial knowledge and understanding through taking responsibility for raising money for charity. Information and communication technology permeates the curriculum. Very good links are being developed with local businesses. A weekly engineering group is run jointly by the school and a retired engineer from a local firm. The curriculum is enriched by an extensive programme of extra-curricular activities which range from foreign language tuition to cricket, tennis and music groups. The vast majority of pupils participate in at least one extra-curricular activity every week. There is a very strong ethos of teamwork.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Pupils are very well supported pastorally and academically. In lessons, they feel secure in answering questions even when they make mistakes because they know that staff will listen to them carefully and respond sensitively. Pupils are grouped appropriately according to ability. Teaching assistants are deployed effectively in response to need and are skilful in assisting pupils with additional learning needs to make progress. The school is well resourced with teaching and learning materials, such as specialist dictionaries and writing equipment, to support pupils with specific learning needs. Relationships throughout the school are excellent. Pupils feel safe in the playground where they are well supervised. Parents are very supportive of the children's learning, particularly of homework where they encourage their children to undertake research at home. An on-line homework support service is also very popular and enables pupils and parents to learn together.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

The headteacher is an outstanding leader. He is ably supported by a very experienced senior leadership team, whose members possess considerable curriculum expertise, and by committed governors. The recruitment and retention of staff is very well managed. The teaching team includes one advanced skills teacher and two leading teachers who frequently lead demonstration lessons and encourage lively debate on what constitutes good practice. Subject leaders play an important role in monitoring standards. A key factor in the school's success is the leadership style adopted by the headteacher and senior staff. They empower teachers to carry out their curricular responsibilities and although budget constraints have led to a reduction in management time, the very high quality of teaching and learning continues to be assured by regular lesson observations. The leadership team and governors are very aware of the challenges of maintaining high standards and sustaining improvement. Self evaluation is well established and is underpinned by a thorough analysis of standards. The school improvement plan is very well constructed. Since the last inspection, the school has

introduced improvements to the outdoor learning environment for reception class pupils and, although space is limited, plans are in hand to develop the area further. Pupils' and parents' views are sought and valued. The school strives constantly to improve communication and has won two national awards for its website. It offers excellent value for money. The parents strongly agree that, 'The school is extremely well run.'

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Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	School Overall	16-19
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	1	NA
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1	NA
The quality and standards in foundation stage	1	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1	NA
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	Yes	NA
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	NA

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	1	NA
The standards ¹ reached by learners	1	NA
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	1	NA
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	1	NA

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1	NA
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1	NA
The behaviour of learners	1	NA
The attendance of learners	1	NA
How well learners enjoy their education	1	NA
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1	NA
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1	NA
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1	NA
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1	NA

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	1	NA
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1	NA
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1	NA

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	1	NA
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1	NA
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	1	NA
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1	NA
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	1	NA
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1	NA
The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected	Yes	NA

The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy	
Learners are encouraged and enabled to eat and drink healthily	Yes
Learners are encouraged and enabled to take regular exercise	Yes
Learners are discouraged from smoking and substance abuse	Yes
Learners are educated about sexual health	Yes
The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe	
Procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements	Yes
Risk assessment procedures and related staff training are in place	Yes
Action is taken to reduce anti-social behaviour, such as bullying and racism	Yes
Learners are taught about key risks and how to deal with them	Yes
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution	
Learners are helped to develop stable, positive relationships	Yes
Learners, individually and collectively, participate in making decisions that affect them	Yes
Learners are encouraged to initiate, participate in and manage activities in school and the wider community	Yes
The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being	
There is provision to promote learners' basic skills	Yes
Learners have opportunities to develop enterprise skills and work in teams	Yes
Careers education and guidance is provided to all learners in key stage 3 and 4 and the sixth form	NA
Education for all learners aged 14–19 provides an understanding of employment and the economy	NA

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Thank you for welcoming me to your school when I visited. I thoroughly enjoyed meeting and talking to you in the classroom and on the playground. It was lovely to see you all enjoying school so much. Your school is an outstanding school. The staff work very hard to plan lessons which are enjoyable and enable you to make excellent progress and achieve high standards. You are extremely well supported by very good teachers and classroom assistants. I was very impressed by the quality of your writing and the presentation of all your work. In particular, well done to the youngest pupils in reception who, despite only recently joining school, are writing interesting sentences. Your headteacher is an outstanding leader. Together with the senior teachers and all the staff, he is always thinking of new initiatives to extend your learning. You have lots of opportunities to participate in clubs and it was good to see so many of you taking part. Good luck to the members of the lacrosse team as they practise for the tournament at the weekend! You live and learn in a calm and well-ordered environment which you contribute to by behaving so well and showing respect for one another. There is a strong sense of teamwork throughout the school. You take seriously the school's philosophy that 'Hard work equals reward.' I hope the rest of the term goes well for you all and that you enjoy all the extra summer activities such as sports days and summer concerts.