



Rathmell Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 121633
LEA North Yorkshire
Inspection number 281063
Inspection dates 1 March 2006 to 2 March 2006
Reporting inspector Mr George Crowther CfBT Lead Inspector

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Hesley Lane
School category	Voluntary aided		Rathmell
Age range of pupils	5 to 10		Settle, North Yorkshire BD24 0LA
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01729 840360
Number on roll	54	Fax number	-
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mrs C Boxall
Date of previous inspection	11 October 1999	Headteacher	Mrs Sarah Peel

Age group	Inspection dates	Inspection number
5 to 10	1 March 2006 - 2 March 2006	281063

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one additional inspector.

Description of the school

Rathmell is a small, rural primary school, but the number of children has almost doubled in recent years. Its social context is no more or less favourable than most schools. Children's attainment when they start school is usually above average, but varies with each small group. No children are eligible for free school meals. The proportion with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below average. All the children are from white British backgrounds. Two staff share the role of headteacher.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Rathmell is a good school with outstanding features. Its intimate, family atmosphere, much valued by parents, creates a very positive environment for children's learning that helps them to do well. As one parent said, 'It's a cherished part of the community.' The school has a clear picture of its effectiveness, it is not complacent, and is well placed to bring about further improvement. It provides good value for money.

Children make consistently good progress. By Year 5, standards are well above average. Particular strengths are the very good results in Year 2 national tests, and the outstanding progress children make in reading. Although progress in mathematics is generally good, there are weaker aspects, such as in problem solving. Children who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities are fully involved in school life and make good progress.

Children's personal development is outstanding because it is encouraged by everything they do at school. They thoroughly enjoy their lessons and are very keen to learn. They get on exceptionally well together, in lessons and around the school. Levels of care are exceptional.

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Lessons are lively and interesting, which ensures the children enjoy their learning. Teaching assistants support children's learning very well. The children say the curriculum has lots of exciting activities, which they like, particularly when everyone studies the same theme. Good provision in the Foundation Stage gives children a flying start at school.

Leadership and management are good. The joint headteachers provide a strong lead in improving aspects of the school's work, though this is not reflected in a concise school development plan focused on raising achievement. The staff work as a cohesive team to nurture children's personal development and help them to get the best from their education. There has been good improvement since the previous inspection.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve aspects of children's mathematics skills, as planned, so that progress matches that in other subjects.
- Ensure that plans for school improvement include only the most important priorities and are strongly linked to improving children's achievement.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Good teaching, based on a detailed knowledge of individual needs, ensures that children achieve well. Good progress in the Foundation Stage means that, by the time children join Year 1, standards are above average. Further good progress leads to results in the Year 2 national tests that have been significantly above average for the past two years. Assessments of children's progress from Year 3 to Year 5 show that many do better

than expected nationally. As a result, they maintain and build upon the high standards seen in Year 2. Across the school, progress in reading is outstanding and standards are high. In mathematics, however, the school is tackling relative weaknesses in children's skills, for example in problem solving. The children's art work, such as that inspired by Van Gogh's 'Starry Night', is of good quality. The consistent progress children make right across the school is a key strength. Challenging targets set for learners are almost always met.

Children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress. For some, achievement is outstanding. The work they do in lessons is well matched to their needs and they get very good support from teachers and teaching assistants. Many parents comment positively on this aspect of the school's work.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Parents feel strongly that the school nurtures their children's confidence and enthusiasm for learning very successfully. The children say, 'We do lots of different things and the teachers make it exciting', which explains why they like being at school and are very keen to learn. The children are friendly, polite and well behaved, reflecting the school's values of RESPECT. Relationships are outstanding, as seen when children of all ages ate and played together at lunch time. As one child said, 'We are all friends in this school'. Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is exceptional. A rich range of experiences, such as the link with an urban school in Bradford, develops children's understanding of themselves and their place in the wider world. Attendance is very good.

Children have a strong sense of their own well-being. They know how to make healthy choices in the food they eat, helped by nutritious school meals, and they appreciate the value of exercise. They say school is a safe place because, 'You can trust everyone to help you'. They know how to stay safe out of school. Every child has a special job to do, which promotes an excellent understanding of contributing to the community. Children are totally at ease expressing their opinions and they say the staff listen.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Good teaching and learning, with interesting activities and effective support for individuals, ensure that children, including those in Reception, make good progress. Lessons are very carefully planned and largely meet the wide range of children's needs. Lively, engaging teaching generates enthusiasm, as seen when the younger children were exploring number patterns. Teachers involve the children effectively through questions and discussion, such as when the older children expressed their arguments for and against space exploration. Teachers manage and organise children's learning very effectively. Good support from teaching assistants helps children to do their best.

Occasionally, the pace of learning slackens because whole-class teaching lasts too long and children's interest wanes. Some tasks are not quite challenging enough for some of the children.

Very thorough assessments of children's attainment and tracking of their progress help the school to raise standards. They have a direct impact on children's learning, such as the recent improvement in writing skills. Children are well aware of their targets for future learning, which stem from clear assessments of what they already know and what they need to learn next. Early assessment of children who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities, and the setting of precise learning targets, help them to make good progress.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum has an imaginative range of activities and experiences. It is carefully planned, which helps the children to build their skills and knowledge steadily. A strong emphasis on literacy and numeracy is complemented successfully by themes that involve the whole school. For example, an exploration of the River Ribble, from its source to the sea, involved three outings and generated much good learning. As one child said, 'The trip to Lytham was great because we found lots of things on the beach'. Activities outside lessons are rich and varied, particularly first-hand experiences and the contribution made by visitors. The children's outstanding personal development owes much to a good programme of personal, social and health education.

The curriculum meets the needs of children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities very well. Clear plans for these children's learning, a good range of programmes to help them, and skilled support from staff all contribute to the good progress they make.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Levels of care are outstanding and parents are right to rate this as an exceptional feature of the school. The school's self-evaluation is too modest. Within a close-knit community, the staff are meticulous in ensuring that each child is safe, happy and ready to learn. The children say they feel cared for because, 'The teachers look after you if you are unhappy'. This feeling of confidence makes a very strong contribution to children's personal development and their enjoyment of learning. Staff have had recent training in first aid and about child protection issues, and all are vigilant about health and safety matters.

Support and guidance for children's learning are strong. Staff are very aware of individual children's needs and provide effective guidance to help them improve, both orally and through marking of work. Support for children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is very effective. The school has good systems for setting targets to help children to improve aspects of their work.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good. The joint headteachers are a cohesive and effective partnership. They have a clear view of how the school can improve further, which is shared well with the whole school community. The staff team speaks highly of their leadership. Views of children, parents, staff and governors are gathered effectively to consider the best areas for improvement. The resulting school development plan, however, has too many priorities and does not always focus clearly enough on improving children's achievement. Nonetheless, the school has been successful in raising standards in a number of aspects of its work. For example, careful analysis of children's writing identified weaker aspects, and targeted action has led to significant improvement. Such successes show the school is well placed to raise standards further. Self-evaluation is accurate, but does not always explore sufficiently the reasons for strengths and weaknesses. Lessons are monitored, often by pairs of teachers, and action taken to improve children's learning. The school uses performance management well to set targets to improve the skills of teachers and teaching assistants.

The views of parents are sought on a range of matters and they feel their opinions are valued. Strong links with the church enrich the life of the school. All the children are fully involved in learning and school life, whatever their background, ability or particular needs. Governors provide considerable support and have a clear understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. They are not afraid to ask challenging questions about the school's performance and they play a full part in planning for the future.

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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?	2	NA
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2	NA
The quality and standards in foundation stage	2	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2	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?	2	NA
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2	NA
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2	NA
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2	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	2	NA
How well learners enjoy their education	1	NA
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	NA
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2	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	2	NA

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2	NA
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2	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?	2	NA
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2	NA
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	2	NA
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2	NA
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	2	NA
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2	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

I visited your school last week to find out if it is giving you the education you should receive. Thank you for making me feel so welcome and for being so helpful when I asked you questions. I enjoyed talking with you, looking at your work and finding out about the things you like doing.

I think there are lots of good things about your school, and I found only one way in which your learning could be even better. The things I particularly like are:

- everyone is friendly and happy, which makes your school a good place to be
- you have interesting things to do in lessons and you work hard
- all the adults give you lots of help so you are successful in your learning
- you particularly enjoy reading and you are very good at it
- everyone tries very hard to follow your school code of RESPECT
- the assembly about World Book Day was very interesting
- you have good opportunities for visits out of school, and you say these are enjoyable
- everyone is very caring, particularly the older children for the younger ones
- your art work - the Van Gogh pictures and the Suns of Fire are particularly good
- your parents think Rathmell is a really good school.

I would like you to work with your teachers to improve the way you learn.

- You are trying to get better at solving problems in mathematics, and your teachers are helping you. You need to carry on with this work so that you will be able to tackle difficult problems really well.

Thank you for helping me so much with the inspection of your school. I hope you will carry on enjoying learning and helping your teachers to make Rathmell School a good place to be.