



Rice Lane Infant and Nursery School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 104586
Local Authority Liverpool
Inspection number 286981
Inspection dates 6–7 December 2006
Reporting inspector Frank Carruthers

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

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|---|--------------------|-------------------------|--------------------|
| Type of school | Infant | School address | Lynwood Road |
| School category | Community | | Liverpool |
| Age range of pupils | 3–7 | | Merseyside L9 3AE |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed | Telephone number | 0151 5259776 |
| Number on roll (school) | 303 | Fax number | 0151 2847321 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body | Chair | Mrs Julie Haywood |
| | | Headteacher | Mrs Lynda Robinson |
| Date of previous school inspection | 12 March 2001 | | |

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| Age group | Inspection dates | Inspection number |
| 3–7 | 6–7 December 2006 | 286981 |

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This larger than average Infant and Nursery school serves the suburbs of Walton and Orrell Park in the north of Liverpool. Almost all pupils are White British and very few are from minority ethnic groups or have English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is above average and the proportion with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is just below average. The school has a large Nursery with part-time places for 120 children and three forms of entry into the Reception year. It has gained several awards, including the Charter Mark for Dyslexia-friendly status, the Inclusion Charter Mark, the Basic Skills and Healthy Schools Awards, Artsmark and Investors in People.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

This is an outstanding school in which pupils achieve exceptionally well in relation to both their personal and their academic development. They reach high standards by the time they move on to the junior school at the end of Year 2. This is the result of the high quality of learning the school offers, its exceptional leadership and excellent teamwork. Parents hold the school in the highest regard. 'The staff are providing a fantastic start to the children's education' is a frequent comment made.

From the outset children are made to feel very welcome in the friendly, supportive environment of the Nursery classes where they flourish and are challenged to do their best. They get off to a flying start because of the excellent provision. Staff in the Foundation Stage have excellent expertise to teach young children, the classes are resourced to a very high standard and there is a fine match of work to the needs of the children.

Standards in reading, writing and mathematics are significantly above average in assessments in Year 2. Most years almost all pupils achieve the expected level in these subjects and a good proportion reach the higher Level 3. This high level of performance has been sustained each year for the last six years. The pupils flourish because the quality of teaching and learning is excellent with strength in depth across all classes, for example in the quality of the relationships between staff and the pupils, the quality of teachers' planning and the extremely rich curriculum offered.

Older pupils comment how much they enjoy school, feel safe and know what they need to do to succeed. They have an excellent awareness of matters of personal safety and the need for a healthy and fit lifestyle. The levels of attendance, however, are below the average for primary schools nationally and are adversely affected by the frequency of childhood illnesses. The school has several initiatives to promote good attendance but it is a key priority for improvement recognised by the school.

The staff work exceptionally well as a team under the outstanding leadership provided by the headteacher and deputy headteacher. There is a total commitment to the aim of seeing pupils achieve high standards of attainment and personal development. The senior leadership team, governors and staff work extremely well together and governors fulfil their responsibilities exceptionally well. The school has made excellent progress since the time of the last inspection, maintaining high standards and improving provision. This indicates the excellent effectiveness of the school's procedures to evaluate itself, though at times their views are too modest. The staff are never complacent and always striving to improve. As a consequence the school has excellent capacity to improve. The cost of educating a child at the school is below that found in most primary schools and, given its high quality, it provides excellent value for money.

What the school should do to improve further

- Do all that the school can to encourage regular attendance so that all pupils achieve their potential.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

Most children start in the Nursery classes with attainment that is below expected levels. Many have poor skills of speech and communication. They get off to an excellent start because of the outstanding provision in the Foundation Stage and by the end of the Reception year they have made excellent progress. They achieve above the expected goals in communication, language and literacy and in mathematical development. In other aspects of their development, such as physical development, they are working at expected levels.

The pupils continue to achieve extremely well in Years 1 and 2 and standards at the end of Year 2 are significantly above average. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make as much progress as their classmates and almost all reach levels expected of 7 year-olds by the end of Year 2, because of the excellent support they receive. The very few learning English as an additional language soon become fluent in the new language. The school caters so well for the different groups of pupils because it analyses and focuses close attention on their performance. For example, the performance of boys had been identified as an area of concern and the school set about dealing with it successfully. In the most recent assessments in 2006 boys' performance matched that of the girls in reading and mathematics and was not far short in writing. Overall, pupils achieve high standards in literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT), which give them an excellent start to the next stage of their education.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

The personal development of the pupils including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. Pupils display excellent attitudes towards their work and are enthusiastic about lessons, which they say 'are fun'. They also thoroughly enjoy the other activities the school offers: for example, pupils who attend the Spanish club are very keen to show off what they can say in the language. The pupils' behaviour is excellent both in class and around school. This is a view shared by parents and visitors to school. In particular, the pupils develop an excellent awareness of personal safety, healthy eating and healthy lifestyles. For example they have learned a great deal from regular visits by the community police officer and they know much about getting to school safely.

Like many infant schools, the school's levels of attendance are adversely affected by childhood illnesses. An analysis of data, however, indicates attendance improves as the pupils get older. The school has several initiatives to raise attendance, including attendance awards and a close liaison with officers of the local authority to monitor patterns. The school also identifies when poor attendance has an adverse impact on pupils achieving their targets.

Pupils develop skills that support their future development exceedingly well.

They learn how to work independently and with one another and this begins in the Nursery classes. They take on responsibilities in school exceptionally well and know they should contribute to the school's code of 'Make our school a happy place.' They have the opportunity to voice their opinions about school matters and they have contributed several ideas toward the vibrant outdoor areas they now enjoy.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 1

The quality of teaching and learning in the Foundation Stage is outstanding, built on the excellent understanding the staff have of how young children learn. Planning and assessment of the children's development are highly effective. A key feature is how adults intervene in the children's play and other activities to promote the children's learning.

Outstanding teaching helps the pupils to continue to learn exceptionally well in Years 1 and 2. Key strengths include the teamwork that goes into the planning of pupils' learning so that all pupils enjoy similar experiences and pupils learn at a challenging rate. Very good use is made of excellent resources and different teaching strategies to promote learning exceptionally well. For example, there are strong priorities on providing speaking and listening opportunities to develop early skills of communication and on practical activities in mathematics and science to give pupils first-hand experiences. The use of ICT is very effective in many lessons and support staff skilfully help pupils with additional needs to make as much progress as their classmates. Excellent relationships between staff and pupils create a highly positive atmosphere for learning. Teachers have high expectations and this is clearly evident in the quality of presentation in pupils' books and feedback given on work completed.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The curriculum meets pupils' needs particularly well but not solely in English and mathematics. The school has embraced many strategies to promote basic skills of speaking and listening, literacy and numeracy and these are clearly highly effective in promoting high standards year after year. There are good cross-curricular links so that pupils learn and practise these skills in other subjects.

Through personal, social and health education and other activities the curriculum promotes pupils' understanding of personal safety and healthy lifestyles exceptionally well, including how to stay physically, emotionally and socially healthy. These aspects are enhanced because the school makes good use of visiting specialists and coaches to increase the range of and opportunities for physical exercise. Multicultural education is fully embedded in the curriculum and is enriched by visiting artists from different cultures.

The school is passionate about doing its best for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and is highly successful in this. Staff identify what will help each pupil and then put on effective small-group courses. As a result the achievement and personal development of these pupils are extremely good. The school also identifies pupils with particular gifts and talents and provides or recommends very good opportunities for them.

Enrichment activities are outstanding and include a range of clubs and sporting activities, visits and visitors. Partnerships with schools, external providers and agencies are excellent in this respect and benefit the pupils very well. The school has even established inter-schools activities in games appropriate for pupils of this age.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

A key feature of the school is the commitment of all to doing their best for each and every pupil so that each achieves highly. Consequently this leads to the excellent personal development of the pupils. This view is shared by parents who report that they feel fully confident in the care and support their children receive. Child protection, safe recruitment of staff, risk assessment and health and safety procedures are all in place. There are highly effective assessment procedures which help the school to identify pupils' needs from an early age and set challenging targets for them to achieve both academically and personally. Links with outside agencies, for instance the educational psychology services and speech and language agencies, are very effective in supporting the work of the school. Staff improve their own expertise in special educational needs by seeking training in specialist areas such as dyslexia and speech and language difficulties so that they can offer support if external providers are unavailable. Another example of how the school looks after its pupils is the very successful Breakfast Club.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

The school's mission statement of 'Achieving through Partnership' is an accurate summary of how the school achieves high standards of personal development and academic performance. The school's leadership team of headteacher, deputy headteacher and other senior staff share this vision. An excellent structure to lead and manage the work of the school has been created that includes high quality subject coordination, year group and cross-phase management, as well as an overarching team of leaders. Together they monitor and evaluate the work of the school very effectively.

The school's self-evaluation is modest when compared to inspectors' findings, for example in judging leadership and management, achievement and standards, the quality of teaching and learning and the curriculum. Nevertheless, it helps staff to very clearly recognise and then address key priorities for school improvement, for example the achievement of different groups of pupils in school.

The governors' contribution to the work of the school is outstanding. They provide a very high level of support and have a detailed insight into how the school is performing. They challenge the school extremely well to account for new initiatives it proposes, for example in seeking accreditation and proposing particular opportunities for the professional development of staff.

Parents rate the school very highly, as do visitors to school and partners. The school is highly successful in developing networks with schools, agencies and visitors that benefit the pupils. A typical comment from outsiders who regularly visit schools is that the school 'stands head and shoulders above the rest in every aspect of school life'.

Inspection judgements

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| Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate | School Overall |
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Overall effectiveness

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

Achievement and standards

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

Personal development and well-being

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|---|---|
| How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners? | 1 |
| The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development | 1 |
| The behaviour of learners | 1 |
| The attendance of learners | 3 |
| How well learners enjoy their education | 1 |
| The extent to which learners adopt safe practices | 1 |
| The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles | 1 |
| The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community | 1 |
| How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being | 1 |

The quality of provision

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

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

Leadership and management

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| How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners? | 1 |
| How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education | 1 |
| How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets | 1 |
| How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can | 1 |
| How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money | 1 |
| The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities | 1 |
| Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements? | Yes |
| Does this school require special measures? | No |
| Does this school require a notice to improve? | No |

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

We enjoyed our visit to your lovely school very much indeed. How lucky you are to have so many things to do every day and such good teachers and helpers to take care of you all!

Yours is an outstanding school. There are very many things in your school that are excellent. For instance:

- your teachers are doing an excellent job taking care of you and helping you all to achieve so well
- your headteacher and deputy headteacher are outstanding
- we were very impressed with how well you are doing in reading, writing and mathematics. This means you will have a great start when you get to the junior school
- your behaviour and attitudes to schoolwork are excellent
- you are all learning really well about living in a fit, healthy and safe way
- you have lots to enjoy at playtimes too.

There is nothing wrong in your school that needs to be put right but we would like you all to attend school as regularly as you can.