



Rack House Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 105448
Local Authority Manchester
Inspection number 287229
Inspection dates 11–12 September 2006
Reporting inspector Sarah Drake

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Yarmouth Drive
School category	Community		Northern Moor, Wythenshawe
Age range of pupils	3–11		Manchester, Lancashire M23 0BT
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	0161 9982544
Number on roll (school)	196	Fax number	0161 9458735
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Mr Glynn Evans
		Headteacher	Miss Tracy Wood
Date of previous school inspection	14 January 2002		

Age group	Inspection dates	Inspection number
3–11	11–12 September 2006	287229

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Rack House Primary is a small school where numbers are steadily rising. A very large proportion of pupils are eligible for a free school meal and above average numbers have learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Most pupils are of White British origin. The school works in partnership with many organisations and is part of the Wythenshawe Education Action Zone (EAZ). It was among the top most improved schools in the country in 2005 and achieved the bronze Healthy Schools award in February 2006. The acting headteacher took up her post five days prior to the inspection.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Rack House Primary whole-heartedly includes pupils with many differing personal, physical or learning needs and provides them with good quality education. Parents' delight with the school is typified by the comments of one, 'My daughter enjoys school because it provides a positive and friendly environment for the children.' Over recent years, pupils' rate of progress and the standards achieved have risen at both key stages, helped by the improved quality of teaching. Children's general skills are low when they join the Nursery, with particular weaknesses in their personal development and ability to communicate. Good provision ensures that they make good progress in the Foundation Stage. By the end of Year 6, standards are now broadly average, a good achievement given the results these pupils reached when in Year 2. Accurate identification of individuals' needs and well-targeted support ensure that pupils of all abilities make good progress. Progress in Years 1 and 2 is satisfactory because pupils take some time to adjust to the more formal teaching methods adopted there.

Central to the school's success are the staff's great commitment to the pupils, their high expectations and their consistent approach to behaviour management. The pupils form good relationships with each other and adults, and collaborate well. Pupils of different gender, ethnicity and ability work and play well together, fully including those who have physical disabilities. They have a good sense of how to live healthily and generally act safely. Behaviour is good because staff adopt a consistent approach, take good care of the pupils and are highly skilled at anticipating possible problems. Lessons are carefully planned and usually run at a cracking pace with a good variety of activities that help pupils regularly refocus their attention and renew their efforts. This is particularly the case for older pupils in Key Stage 2. Staff throughout the school skilfully nurture pupils' self-belief, but in Years 1 to 6 they do not place the strong emphasis on fostering their personal development and independence that is such a successful feature of the Foundation Stage. Pupils seldom take the initiative and many require much adult guidance: they do not take enough responsibility for improving their own work. However, they enjoy school, particularly the good range of extra activities that enrich the curriculum.

The main issues from the previous inspection have been suitably tackled and the school has developed strong partnerships in the local area that enhance its provision. However, whole school self-evaluation is too positive in some respects, development planning does not have a sharp enough focus and financial management is not sufficiently soundly based on educational knowledge. Costs are relatively high but pupils achieve well and the school provides satisfactory value for money. Strong subject leadership, good teamwork and very hard work have underpinned the school's improvement. The acting headteacher has been in post too short a time yet to have had an impact on the school. There is satisfactory capacity for further improvement.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve whole school development planning and management so that actions are prioritised and soundly based on educational priorities to improve pupil performance further.
- Extend the successful teaching methods of the Foundation Stage into Year 1.
- Help pupils to develop self-discipline, confidence and the ability to work independently.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

When they start school children's skills are low compared to the expectations for their age. Skilled teaching, very good teamwork and close observation of individuals' progress in the Foundation Stage ensure that children get off to a flying start in their early years. By the end of their Reception year, the great majority reach the expected goals for their age and some exceed them. The school's strong emphasis on developing pupils' communication and mathematical skills ensures that pupils make good progress and achieve well. Progress in Years 1 and 2 is slowed as the pupils take time to adjust to a more formal approach to their work. By the end of Year 6, they reach broadly average standards despite a higher than average proportion having learning difficulties and/or disabilities. A focus on writing and mathematics has led to increased numbers of pupils achieving the higher level in these areas in 2006. Pupils' basic skills in information and communication technology (ICT) are sufficient to support their learning in other areas.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

Pupils consider that school is, 'fun and the best in Manchester' because the staff help them and make lessons interesting. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory. The school operates as an orderly community and most pupils readily comply with staff guidance. Members of the gardening club take good care of their burgeoning flower and vegetable patches. However, in general, pupils are relatively reluctant to use their initiative because they have too few opportunities to take on real responsibility or contribute to the community. Many, particularly boys, are attention seeking and inclined to act in a silly manner. Attendance levels are improving but are still below the national average, mainly due to some long term absence through illness and pupils being taken on holiday in term time.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Good quality teaching, based on the secure foundation of respectful relationships, enables pupils to make good progress. Teachers' strong subject knowledge, careful planning, awareness of pupils' different needs and sensitive questioning mean that they set pupils up to succeed. For example, one pupil hesitated when she was asked for an idea so, rather than embarrass her, the teacher suggested everyone quickly shared thoughts with their neighbour and then asked the same pupil again, who now was able to make a sensible suggestion. Teachers share their enthusiasms, vary activities successfully and ensure that lessons challenge pupils' thinking and move at a swift pace. Good pupil management and stimulating classrooms lead to a calm atmosphere and enthusiastic learners, although many pupils are dependent on adult input to keep them focused. Teachers and classroom assistants form good teams to support pupils' learning. This is particularly strong in the Foundation Stage where pupils thrive. However, the move to more formal teaching styles in Year 1 is too sudden for some pupils and leads to their progress faltering. Teachers assess pupils' progress regularly and accurately, generally using the information well to plan suitable work for those of different ability.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum matches the needs of the pupils well. It ensures that they develop their knowledge, skills and understanding in a logical manner and makes good links between different subjects, especially for older pupils. Strong provision in the Foundation Stage ensures these young pupils progress well in all areas of learning, establishing a solid basis on which to build. Pupils have good opportunities to visit museums and other places of educational interest, including participation in a residential experience. Visitors, lunchtime activities and out of school clubs also contribute to pupils' enjoyment and support their learning well. Everyone has the opportunity to become involved in activities: this is reflected in the school's Silver Award for inclusion. Recent enhancements to the provision for ICT are paving the way for increased staff and pupil expertise in this subject. Staff recognise that pupils' personal development is just satisfactory and are working to extend the school's personal, social and health education programme.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The school takes good care of all its pupils. They trust staff and turn to them if they are troubled or upset, confident that they will receive good support. Parents and carers find staff approachable. Particularly in the Foundation Stage they work closely with school staff to support their children's education. The continuity provided by teachers

often having the same class for two years means they develop very good knowledge of individuals' needs and can offer good academic guidance. The support for those who are particularly vulnerable or who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities is strong, enhanced by good partnership with outside agencies. Effective arrangements ensure child protection, and staff's vigilance, including that of the enthusiastic midday supervisors, means that pupils work and play in a safe environment.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Strong leadership of subjects and other areas such as the Foundation Stage, combined with good humoured teamwork and dedication to the needs of individuals underlie the school's success. Every child does matter at Rack House Primary. Teachers assess pupils' work regularly and are now charting their progress systematically. Their analysis of the information guides decision making about where to direct resources. Staff are eager to develop their professionalism and are responsive to advice. Subject leaders closely monitor their areas. The mathematics coordinator's analysis of specific weaknesses, for example, problem-solving, and his support for staff has led to good improvement in this subject. Similarly, the emphasis placed on writing has raised standards in English. Close partnership with, for instance, the local school for pupils with physical disabilities and the EAZ has improved staff expertise and, thereby, the provision for pupils. The school runs smoothly on a day to day basis, with efficient and friendly office staff.

However, whole school development planning is fragmented. It is not based on an evaluation of the current position nor does it prioritise the actions to be taken or establish measurable success criteria related to pupils' achievement. This means that the school operates without a clear focus for improvement. Financial management is not sufficiently closely linked to educational purposes. Data inaccuracies are not picked up quickly enough and some school procedures are not reviewed with sufficient regularity. Judgements relating to the quality of leadership and management, the capacity to improve and pupils' personal development in the school's self-evaluation are too positive. Governors and the acting headteacher are aware of the weaknesses and are eager to do their part to bring about improvement.

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Inspection judgements

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

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	2
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	3
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3
The behaviour of learners	2
The attendance of learners	3
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	3
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	3
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2

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

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	3
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	3
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3
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

Thank you for being so welcoming to Ms Kenna and myself when we visited your school recently. We enjoyed our stay and your willingness to talk with us helped us to understand what it is like to be a pupil at Rack House Primary. Here is a list of your school's main strengths:

- children in the Nursery and Reception classes have a really good time and make rapid progress in all areas of learning
- other pupils also make good progress to reach average standards by the end of Year 6
- you enjoy school and find lessons interesting
- staff are very good at helping you to concentrate and remember to behave well
- teachers provide interesting activities that are well suited to your different needs
- lessons are lively and keep you on your toes
- everyone has the opportunity to take part in what is on offer
- staff work well together and with outside experts in your best interests.

This is a list of things that we have asked your school to do now to make it even better:

- make sure that all staff are clear about the main things the school needs to do to help you do even better with your work
- give Year 1 pupils more opportunities to learn in a less formal way than they do at the moment
- encourage you all to take on more responsibility and use your initiative in lessons and around school.

Your part will be to continue to enjoy learning, to attend school regularly and be more prepared to think for yourselves.