



Raynsford VC Lower School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 109601
Local Authority BEDFORDSHIRE
Inspection number 288445
Inspection dates 6–7 February 2007
Reporting inspector Paul Missin

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

Type of school	First	School address	Park Lane
School category	Voluntary controlled		Henlow
Age range of pupils	4–9		Bedfordshire SG16 6AT
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01462 812319
Number on roll (school)	130	Fax number	01462 812319
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Mr A Painter
		Headteacher	Mrs S Phillips
Date of previous school inspection	25 February 2002		

Age group 4–9	Inspection dates 6–7 February 2007	Inspection number 288445
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector over two days.

Description of the school

This lower school is smaller than most primary schools. Most children benefit from pre school experience. Their attainment on admission varies from year to year but is broadly average. The proportions of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities and those eligible for free school meals are below average. Almost all pupils have White British backgrounds and a very small number of pupils are at an early stage of learning English. The school has achieved a Healthy School Award.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

This is an outstanding school that promotes excellent achievement in pupils' academic and personal development. The success of the school is based on the outstanding leadership of the headteacher who ensures that its work is rigorously monitored and evaluated. The excellent use of assessments of pupils' progress and attainment gives the school a very clear view of its strengths and areas to develop. There is no complacency among the staff and they are continually seeking ways of getting even better. Among its several great strengths are the ways in which all staff work closely as a team to provide the best they can for the pupils. The school improvement plan is excellent. It ensures the best possible progress for all pupils and involves all staff very effectively. Governors fulfil their roles very well and contribute significantly to the school's work.

Pupils' achievement is outstanding. Pupils make rapid progress in each phase of the school. From a broadly average start, children make good progress in the Foundation Stage and reach standards that are above average at the beginning of Year 1. Pupils continue to make quick progress in all years. Standards in Year 2 have been consistently well above average in recent years and in 2006, standards and progress in reading were exceptional. By the end of Year 4 standards are also very high, especially in reading. Standards and progress in writing are above average but not quite as high as those in reading or mathematics.

Teaching is excellent. Teachers manage pupils very well and value and support their learning. The enjoyment of learning is given very high priority. Pupils said that they liked school because, 'lessons are challenging and fun'. This approach, together with a rich and varied curriculum, ensures that pupils' all round learning is exciting, interesting and challenging. Assessment procedures are outstanding. Data is used very well to track the progress pupils make and set learning targets. The good provision in the Foundation Stage ensures children quickly learn to share, take turns and work together well. Pupils with learning difficulties have good support and make very good progress towards their own learning targets.

The children's personal development is outstanding and their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are good. Pupils behave exceptionally well and attend regularly. They take responsibility for organising and assessing their work and enjoy being school and class counsellors and 'buddies'. Across the school, pupils gain a very good appreciation of being safe and healthy lifestyles and the extremely effective promotion of basic skills prepares them well for their next school and the wider world of work. The significant strengths in this school ensure it is exceptionally well placed to improve further and it provides outstanding value for money.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards in writing across the school.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

Pupils make outstanding progress from the time they start school until they complete Year 4. In the Foundation Stage, children make good progress in their learning and reach standards that are above those expected for their age. Pupils make very good progress in Years 1 and 2 where standards are well above average. Standards in Year 2 have been significantly above those in most schools for several years and in 2006, standards in reading were exceptionally high. Pupils in Years 3 and 4 make excellent good progress and also reach standards which are very high, particularly in reading. By the time they leave the school almost three quarters of them are reaching standards in their reading that are typical of eleven year olds and over a half reach similar standards in mathematics. Pupils with learning difficulties achieve very well and make very good progress towards their own learning targets.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

The personal development of pupils is outstanding their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are good. They work very successfully to establish a very impressive and cohesive school community. Pupils' excellent attitudes and behaviour are important reasons why they make such rapid progress in their learning. Pupils are polite, articulate and confident and demonstrate mature attitudes as they take responsibility in the school as school counsellors or 'playground buddies'. They are proud of their school and enjoy their teachers and their lessons. Attendance is well above average. Pupils have a good knowledge of how to keep themselves safe and have a good understanding of health issues. They make an outstanding contribution to the wider community through support of church and village organisations and in raising money for local and national charities. Their ability to work so well in teams and the excellent acquisition of basic literacy and numeracy skills ensures that pupils are very well prepared for later adult life.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 1

Teaching and learning are outstanding. A key strength which explains the excellent progress that pupils make is due to the very positive way in which they are managed. This encourages their excellent attitudes and secures their full commitment to their own learning. Teachers consistently value pupils' work and their contributions to lessons. The excellent collection and use of assessment information is another reason why pupils do so well. Using this information teachers plan their lessons well and ensure that pupils know very clearly what they have to do to improve. In the most successful lessons, teachers are beginning to use role play and drama very effectively

to support pupils' learning. Teachers and teaching assistants support pupils with learning difficulties well enabling them to make very good progress. The teaching of children in the Reception class is good. Children are given interesting tasks to do and a careful check is maintained on the progress they are making.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The school provides an outstanding curriculum. It is very well planned to provide the very effective teaching of basic literacy, numeracy and science skills. The use of interactive white boards and the class computers enhance the breadth of learning opportunities greatly. Good links are made between different subjects. There is a good number and range of extracurricular clubs to further develop pupils' social skills, and interesting visits and visitors to the school enliven provision. Older pupils take part in an excellent residential visit to France, which they enjoy very much. The Foundation Stage curriculum is very well planned, packed with exciting activities both in the classroom and using the outdoor facilities, so that children enjoy school from the start.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

The school provides excellent care, support and guidance. As a result, pupils feel safe, secure and well looked after, and they have a very positive view of school. They are confident that if they feel hurt or distressed the school will take great care of them. These strengths impact very positively on their capacity and willingness to learn and are appreciated by parents. One was very pleased that her child had been 'cared for with much sensitivity and support.' Procedures for ensuring all pupils' health and safety and well-being are good. The statutory requirements relating to appointments of staff are being met. Assessment procedures and academic guidance are excellent. The school undertakes a very thorough analysis of pupils' standards and this information is used most effectively to track the progress pupils make and to set them helpful learning targets. Pupils say how valuable they find these and how they are helping them to improve.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

Leadership and management are excellent. The headteacher provides dynamic and charismatic leadership. She has successfully created and sustains an ethos that promotes very high academic standards and values. She supports all pupils and staff very well and this creates a very impressive sense of community in the school. The work of the school is centred on an excellent improvement plan. This brings together a rigorous evaluation of the school's work and a drive to maintain the very high standards that are achieved. All staff are fully involved with and committed to the school's continued development. Senior staff support the school's work well and have a highly positive effect on the high standards achieved. The school has a very clear view of its strengths,

based on a very rigorous and comprehensive analysis of assessment data. Governors are well organised and through the well established committees have a clear overview of the school's work. However, there are too few formal opportunities for governors to evaluate the progress being made through the school improvement plan.

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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?	1
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	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

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	2

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The behaviour of learners	1
The attendance of learners	2
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
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

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	2
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

7 February 2007

Dear Children

Raynsford VC Lower School, Park Lane, Henlow, Bedfordshire, SG16 6AT

Thank you for making me so welcome when I came to the school recently to see how well you were doing.

Here are the things that are best about your school:

- You work very hard and achieve outstandingly well in lots of different ways. The standard of your reading is very high indeed.
- Teachers are excellent in the way they challenge you to do better and provide interesting things for you to do that make lessons fun.
- Teachers help you to do better by the very careful records that they keep of what you can do.
- Your headteacher and all the staff are outstandingly good at ensuring that the school continues to improve.

There is one thing that I think you could do better:

- The progress that you make in your writing which is not quite as good as that in reading and mathematics.

May I thank you again for your welcome.

Yours sincerely

Paul Missin

(Lead inspector)