

Rossmore School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	111112
Local Authority	Cheshire
Inspection number	288860
Inspection dates	4–5 July 2007
Reporting inspector	Eithne Proffitt

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	137
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs J Rich
Headteacher	Mrs Susan Davis-McCoy
Date of previous school inspection	10 February 2003
School address	Red Lion Lane Little Sutton Ellesmere Port Cheshire CH66 1HF
Telephone number	0151 3393779
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Age group	4–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional inspectors.

Description of the school

Pupils come from quite a wide area to attend this smaller than average school. It is situated in a mixed residential village within a larger urban town in Cheshire. There are a high proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals and almost all pupils are of White British heritage. The number of pupils who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities is low in all classes, with only one child having a statement of special educational need. Most children are taught in classes with pupils of the same age, although fluctuating numbers over recent years have led to some pupils being taught in mixed-age groups. The school has achieved the Inclusion Quality Mark, Investors in People Status, the Healthy Schools Award and the Activemark Gold for sporting achievements.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

This is a satisfactory school that cares for pupils well. It gives sound value for money. Pupils' personal development is good because of the compelling care the school takes of its pupils and the strong elements of some recent innovation in an otherwise satisfactory curriculum. The good care is the driving force behind many actions and initiatives, ensuring that pupils feel safe and confident.

Pupils know how to make healthy lifestyle choices and this has very recently been acknowledged through the achievement of the Healthy Schools Award. Pupils are safety conscious from an early age and school procedures for ensuring the safeguarding and care of its pupils promote this well. Pupils enjoy coming to school - one parent commented, 'I have no problem getting my daughter out of bed - she's always ready to go to school.' Pupils' attendance is good and improving. This is largely due to the carefully monitored initiatives put in place by the school and led effectively by the learning mentor. Relationships throughout the school between pupils and adults alike are secure and firmly based on mutual respect. Behaviour is good and the pupils feel confident that there is someone they can talk to if they have a problem. Pupils are encouraged to take responsibility in and around the school and do so with enthusiasm and commitment. The 'Hear to Help' service, for example, provided by older pupils contributes effectively to the care throughout the school. The active school council makes a really good contribution to the school and ensures that the pupils have a voice and that voice is valid and valued. Parents are pleased with the school and feel that it takes good account of their opinions. As one parent noted, 'The headteacher has listened to and acted on our views'.

The youngest pupils get off to a good start in Reception and, from their below average starting points, make good progress. They enter Key Stage 1 with the expected skills for their age. Achievements and standards through the rest of the school are satisfactory. Over recent years, standards at the end of Years 2 and 6 have fluctuated around the average levels. Science is a strength, with mathematics, but more especially writing, remaining relative weaknesses. Both national data and the school's tracking systems indicate that the progress made by the majority of pupils is satisfactory. The good emphasis on the arts is reflected in the calibre and notoriety of the school choir and the high standard of art work throughout the school.

Teaching and learning, whilst showing some examples of both good and outstanding practice, is satisfactory overall. It ensures that pupils make the progress expected of them through the school. However, teachers miss opportunities to further promote pupils' writing, numeracy, and information and communication technology (ICT) skills in other subjects. Systems to provide sound academic guidance for pupils that would help them to understand how well they are learning are in place. However, the use and impact of these are not consistent across the school and not all pupils are confident about how well they are achieving or how they can move their learning forward.

The new leadership team is firmly committed to providing the best of opportunities for all pupils and this has been rewarded with the Inclusion Quality Mark. Governors are actively involved and provide both support and a level of challenge. The school has rightly prioritised areas that require improvement. Although the focus of these priorities is at present more on actions than evaluating impact, the successes gained demonstrate the school's satisfactory capacity to improve. The school recognises the need to monitor teaching and learning and has

extended responsibility for this to include middle managers. However, the evaluations of teaching are not yet firmly focused on the levels of progress that pupils make in lessons.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards in writing.
- Increase the use and development of writing, numeracy and ICT skills across the curriculum to improve standards in these subjects.
- Improve the consistency of marking, feedback and assessment so that pupils know how well they are doing and what they need to do to move their learning forward.

A small proportion of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Children enter the Reception class with a varying range of skills but are generally below expectations for children of that age, particularly in their language, communication, personal and social development. These youngest pupils settle well and get off to a good start because of the wide range of activities that are presented to them, both indoor and outdoor, to support their learning. By the time they leave Reception, pupils have made good progress and are working at the expected levels for their age. The progress that pupils make in Key Stage 1 is satisfactory. Over recent years, standards at the end of Year 2 have varied. Pupils' lower performance in writing tasks have contributed to this. School tracking data show that pupils' satisfactory rate of progress continues through Key Stage 2 to Year 6. By the time these pupils leave the school, their standards remain broadly average, although mathematics results have been consistently lower than those in English and science, with science proving a strength of the school. There are further fluctuations within the English results, with pupils' reading attainment far exceeding that of their writing. Early indications for 2007 are that pupils have broadly reached the standards expected of them but again, attainment in writing continues to be a relative weakness. The progress that pupils make in their lessons reflects their progress made over time. The work that pupils produce in art is of a particularly high standard. The school is awash with examples of this and pupils share it with pride.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Moral and social development are particularly strong. As a result, pupils very clearly know the difference between right and wrong and their behaviour is good. Relationships with adults and other pupils are firmly based on respect for all. Children in the Foundation Stage quickly settle and develop the social skills necessary for school. Pupils welcome the many opportunities to make a strong contribution to the work of the school, for example, through the good work of the school council. It contributes well to decision making and ensures that all pupils throughout the school have a say. Parents are rightly pleased that their children thoroughly enjoy coming to school. This is reflected in the improving attendance and punctuality where recent initiatives have had a positive effect. Pupils play safely and clearly understand the importance of eating healthily and exercising. The ten-minute aerobic session every morning has contributed well to this and also to ensuring that pupils and adults get off to a lively start at the beginning of each day. Pupils are proud

of their achievements and have good attitudes to school and their work. These attributes and the development of sound basic skills mean that they are well prepared for later schooling and life.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

The satisfactory overall quality of the teaching promotes sound progress and pupils make the gains that are expected of them. In the Foundation Stage, teaching and learning are good and children progress well, particularly in the development of communication and social skills. In particular, teaching is carefully targeted to individual needs through focus groups alongside good continuous and enhanced learning opportunities. As a result, children make good progress. Across the school some examples were seen of good and outstanding lessons which promote better progress. Typical features of teaching include:

- good relationships between staff and pupils ensuring that pupils enjoy school and feel that they can turn to teachers for help
- satisfactory subject knowledge and understanding promoting sound progress
- planning matching work to the differing needs of pupils.

Pupils' work is regularly marked and strengths are generally highlighted, but there is some inconsistent practice across the school, particularly in writing. Marking does not point out frequently enough how well pupils are progressing towards their individual targets and how they can improve their work, especially in the subjects prioritised for improvement.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum makes a good contribution to pupils' personal development. Pupils have enjoyed the 'Themed Weeks' that focus on specific matters, such as multicultural understanding and disability. Art makes a good contribution to the quality of the curriculum, particularly the development of a variety of skills from other cultures such as African and Aboriginal art. Academic development is promoted soundly. Basic skills in reading are developed well through work in a range of subjects. Writing, ICT and number skills have not been as well used or sufficiently developed across other subjects. The school has rightly recognised the need to promote this. The curriculum is richly enhanced by school journeys, visiting speakers and clubs. Pupils benefit considerably from a wide range of sports, arts and other activities. Physical education is enhanced by the use of specialist coaching and the strong links with local secondary schools. The curriculum in the Foundation Stage is good and strongly fosters basic literacy and numeracy skills.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

An advantage of this small school is that adults know the pupils and their families extremely well. Staff provide very good personal support for them, especially when they are experiencing difficulties and require extra care. There is good teamwork within the school and also with outside agencies. The school goes to great efforts to ensure that any additional care and support that a pupil may need is provided. For example, the school's learning mentor's work with pupils

who are struggling with attendance or punctuality is particularly effective. Pupils also take responsibility for caring for each other. The innovative 'Hear to Help' Service provides a listening ear for pupils who are feeling vulnerable. Procedures for safeguarding pupils match requirements and risk assessments ensure the safety of all who work and learn in the school and beyond. Academic guidance is based on the school's present system of layered targets but pupils are not given consistent feedback, through marking and assessment, that would help them understand how well they are doing, where to focus their efforts in order to improve their work and what are the 'next steps' in their learning.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Together, the headteacher and senior management team provide a new and committed leadership. Senior leaders have pinpointed areas of relative weakness and ensured leaders and managers at all levels and all teaching staff are fully aware of what needs to be developed. There is clear guidance about how the school intends to bring about improvement. Action has been taken but the full impact of this is yet to be seen in improved levels of pupil progress. Middle managers take increasing responsibility for monitoring provision in their subject areas. They are less effective in using rigorous assessment of pupils' work and analysis of data to identify ways to drive learning forward. Self-evaluation is improving but some judgements are too generous. It is clear that the school is successfully addressing the priorities but the impact of these has yet to be fully realised. Development planning is comprehensive but not focused enough on evaluating the outcomes for pupils. The school runs smoothly and financial management is good. Governors have an informed understanding of the school's needs and share the commitment to improvement. They take the opportunity to challenge and accordingly fulfil their role of critical friend well.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	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?	3
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?	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	3

Personal development and well-being

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

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	3
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3
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.

Annex A

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	3
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 all for the warm welcome you gave us when we visited your school. We really enjoyed meeting you and are very grateful to all of you who chatted to us - I know you are proud to be part of Rossmore School. It is currently providing you with a satisfactory education. This means that there are some things that your school does well and others that need some improvement.

Here are some of the good things about your school.

- You are very polite, friendly and obviously enjoy coming to school.
- Your behaviour is good and you get on really well with your teachers and your friends.
- You feel safe in school and your teachers, teaching assistants and all your other helpers look after you very well.
- You work hard in lessons, especially if you are asked to work in pairs or groups.
- You are becoming particularly good scientists!
- Your school gives you lots of activities outside the classrooms, through visits and visitors that help you learn in a really fun way.

To help you to do even better in your work, I have asked all your teachers to do the following.

- Help you to become better writers.
- Give you lots of different opportunities to use your writing, maths and ICT so that you can gain more skills to help you in your future work.
- Check more carefully the progress that you are making in your work and to continue to talk to you about it. This way, you should be really sure that you know how well you are doing, how you can improve your work and know what the next steps are for you to move forward in your learning.

You can help to achieve by continuing to work hard in your lessons.

Thank you once again for being so kind and friendly, I really enjoyed watching you at work and play!