



Rift House Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 111640
Local Authority Hartlepool
Inspection number 289011
Inspection dates 6–7 February 2007
Reporting inspector Ann Wallis

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Masefield Road
School category	Community		Hartlepool
Age range of pupils	3–11		TS25 4JY
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01429 275239
Number on roll (school)	202	Fax number	01429 292188
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Mr Tim Lightfoot
		Headteacher	Mrs Carole Carroll
Date of previous school inspection	1 October 2001		

Age group 3–11	Inspection dates 6–7 February 2007	Inspection number 289011
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Rift House is an average-sized primary school serving an area of considerable socio-economic disadvantage. The school provides out-of-school care in the form of a breakfast and an after-school club. Well above average numbers of pupils are eligible for free school meals. There are very few pupils from minority ethnic groups and whose first language is not English. Average numbers of pupils have learning difficulties and disabilities. Attainment on entry to the school is below average.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Rift House is a good school. The leadership and management of the school are good. The headteacher and all staff work hard to establish a good climate for learning in which pupils can achieve well. However, several changes of teacher in classes for older pupils and the consequent disruption in pupils' progress have led to underachievement in the recent past, as shown in the results of the Year 6 national tests in 2006. Effective leadership provided by the new headteacher and the work of a newly formed senior leadership team have put the school back on track and continuity of teaching has been restored.

Children join the Foundation Stage with skills and knowledge below what is typical for their age. They make good progress and reach standards close to those expected by the time they begin Key Stage 1. Standards are in line with average in Year 2, as shown consistently by the results of national tests. The results of the national tests of Year 6 pupils were broadly in line with average until 2006 when they fell below average and did not meet the school's targets. The school has taken effective action to improve teaching and pupils' progress in Key Stage 2, both are now consistently good. Lessons are lively and interesting and pupils really enjoy learning. The school is confident that the Year 6 targets will be met this year and inspection evidence supports this view.

Teaching and learning are good. Teachers have very good relationships with their pupils. They continually encourage and praise them so that they gain confidence and are keen to ask questions, try out new ideas and learn more. The curriculum has been reviewed recently and is well matched to pupils' needs. Subjects are often linked together through interesting topics, enabling pupils to practise their skills of literacy, numeracy and computing.

Parents are overwhelmingly supportive of the school. One said, 'I would strongly recommend this school to others. My child is happy, motivated and making good progress.' Another said, 'I have moved to the other side of town but would not think of taking my children away from this school.' Pupils were equally enthusiastic about their school and were very keen to tell inspectors about the clubs they enjoyed going to, the interesting trips they had been on and the lessons they liked.

Pupils' personal development and well-being, and the care, support and guidance they receive are good. The health, safety, well-being and enjoyment of all pupils are truly at the heart of the school's work. Consequently, pupils enjoy coming to school, behaviour is good and most attend school regularly and arrive on time. However, the school's monitoring of pupils' progress is inconsistent. It is not sufficiently frequent in all classes to enable teachers to identify pupils who are underachieving.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that Year 6 pupils reach their targets in the national tests;
- Monitor pupils' progress regularly in all classes to identify those who are underachieving.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Achievement is good and standards are broadly average. Children make good progress in the Foundation Stage. They make particularly good progress in their personal, social and physical development and reach expected overall standards although standards in language and mathematical development remain a little below average for children of their age. Pupils continue to make good progress in Key Stage 1 and the results of the 2006 assessments of Year 2 pupils were close to average, as they have been for the last three years.

Year 6 pupils' test results have usually been close to average in the past but fell below average in 2006: they were well below the school's targets and the pupils underachieved, particularly in science. This fall in standards was due to a lack of continuity in teaching and pupils' learning caused by staffing difficulties. The progress of this group of pupils was made a special focus of the inspection. The school has made the raising of standards in Key Stage 2 a priority and has taken action to do so. The school's assessment of Year 6 is that the pupils are making good progress and are expected to reach the targets set for them in this year's national tests. Indeed, the school believes that the great majority of Year 6 pupils have already reached the standard expected for their age in English and science. The inspectors saw for themselves that pupils were clearly making good progress in lessons, consistent with the school's own judgements. The teaching has improved because staffing is now settled.

Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities achieve as well as their peers because they receive very constructive individual help from teachers and also from teaching assistants. This good work has a major impact on pupils' progress.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' personal development and well being are good. Assemblies and a well-structured programme of lessons, visits, and thematic studies, such as those about mountains in Year 6, foster good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Pupils behave well and conduct themselves sensibly and safely in lessons and in the playground. They say they feel safe in school. They are confident and respectful in their dealings with adults and each other. Pupils are very enthusiastic, cheerful and industrious, which reflects how much they enjoy school. They work really well throughout lessons and show interest and keenness in all that they do. The school has made strenuous and very successful efforts to improve attendance and punctuality. Attendance is now average and improving. Pupils adopt a healthy life-style as a result of the school's outstanding range of physical activities and attention to healthy eating. The school has achieved Healthy Schools Status and has a Sports Active mark. Many pupils make a full contribution to their school community. For example, the school council plays an active part in evaluating activities such as those available at lunchtime and through after-school clubs. Playground 'buddies' play an important role in promoting

friendships; parents and pupils say that there is no bullying. The school prepares pupils well for later life by developing their basic skills in literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT) and through experience of team-work in lessons and out of school activities.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are good and some outstanding lessons were seen during the inspection. Good teaching in the Foundation Stage helps children to make good progress, especially in their personal and social development.

Lessons are thoroughly well planned and teachers share their objectives with pupils. They have a good variety of activities, which are well suited to pupils' abilities and make learning fun. They are used very effectively to capture and hold pupils' interest. Pupils pay attention in lessons, contribute willingly and work hard. Good use of interactive whiteboards and group activities provide many opportunities for pupils to develop speaking and listening skills through discussion and questioning. Pupils are taught to reflect on what they have learned and the marking of their work shows them how to improve.

Support staff work closely with teachers and help pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities so that they achieve well.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is good. The planning for basic skills is good and therefore the provision for literacy, numeracy and ICT is effective. The school has recently tried out new approaches to the teaching of literacy, which have raised standards and increased pupils' enjoyment. The provision for pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities is good. Pupils have excellent opportunities to develop self-confidence and teamwork in the regular 'living for sport' sessions, which take place before and after school. Pupils are very enthusiastic about the broad range of trips, visits and after school clubs that they are offered and a wide range of activities is planned for them, including street dancing, sewing, cooking and computing. A very well organised personal, social and health education programme informs pupils how to stay safe, care for others and to be responsible members of their community.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Care, guidance and support for pupils are good. The school is welcoming and caring. Good procedures are in place to ensure pupils' health and safety and to manage child protection and the appointment of suitable staff. The school undertakes comprehensive

risk assessments for visits out of school and pupils are made aware of safety considerations. The school ensures that pupils can always find someone to turn to if they have a problem. Very good procedures ensure that children settle quickly into school and benefit from supportive arrangements with local secondary schools to help them when they move on. Productive links with the local authority and parents make a very positive contribution to the care pupils receive.

The school has procedures for monitoring pupils' progress and pupils say that they like the way that the school involves them in the process. However, the application of the procedures is inconsistent and in some year groups the school does not monitor progress often enough to identify pupils who are not making the progress they should.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher has encouraged a flexible and creative approach to learning in which new teaching strategies have been tested, the curriculum has been made more relevant to pupils' needs; the personal development and well-being of every child is central to the school's work.

Governors know the school very well and are fully involved in its work. Finances are well managed and the school provides good value for money.

The school evaluates its work accurately and has identified clear priorities for development. Systems have been put in place to monitor teaching and learning more effectively following the dip in test results in 2006. As a consequence of vigorous action to improve teaching, pupils are now making good progress throughout the school. Staff have welcomed this action and their morale is high. In view of the quality of the school's self-evaluation and the recent improvements in teaching and pupils' progress, the school has a good capacity to improve further.

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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	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2
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?	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	1
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?	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?	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2
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

Rift House Primary School

Masefield Road

Hartlepool

TS25 4JY

6th February 2007

Dear Pupils

Thank you for giving us such a warm welcome to your school when we visited this week. We enjoyed seeing your work in lessons and talking with you about all the things you like doing at school.

We found many good things about your school:

- Your behaviour is good, you enjoy school and work hard.
- You make good progress in your work.
- Your teachers and classroom assistants teach you very well and help you to do the best you can.
- Your school looks after you well and helps you become caring and responsible young people.

We also found some things that would improve the school and help it to be even better.

We think that the school should:

- Ensure that results of the Year 6 tests meet the school's targets.
- Ensure that children who are not doing well enough have extra help.

You go to a good school. You can help your school to improve even more by always doing your best, behaving well and making sure that you come to school regularly.

I send you my best wishes.

Yours sincerely

Mrs Ann Wallis

(Lead inspector)