



Rolph Church of England Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 115248
Local Authority ESSEX
Inspection number 290177
Inspection dates 5–6 February 2007
Reporting inspector John Paull

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	High Street
School category	Voluntary aided		Thorpe-le-Soken
Age range of pupils	4–11		Essex CO16 0DY
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01255 861317
Number on roll (school)	188	Fax number	01255 861033
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Mrs Lesley Bostock
		Headteacher	Mr John Crane
Date of previous school inspection	10 June 2002		

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Rolph Church of England Primary School is a little smaller than average. Its pupils are drawn from a wide area around the village in which it is situated, and many come from some distance. Nearly all pupils are of White British heritage. None speak English as an additional language. The proportion with learning difficulties and disabilities 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

Rolph Church of England Primary is a good school, which matches its view of itself. Pupils and their parents speak highly of it and their confidence is well placed. Good leadership and management over the past two years have resulted in a very rapid recovery from a considerable drop in standards in 2004. At that time, the school had passed through a difficult period which caused a loss of confidence amongst staff. A fall in the quality of teaching and learning led to poor behaviour and, in turn, achievement fell away badly, especially at the top of the school. This was reflected in Year 6 test results. Since then, changes in leadership have resulted in a return of strong morale. New teaching initiatives have been introduced successfully. Teaching and learning are good. The quality of provision in Reception is good and children achieve well from broadly average starting points. Good progress and achievement continue throughout the school. At the end of Year 2, standards are often a little above average. Results of Year 6 national tests in 2006 indicated above average standards in English, mathematics and science. Assessment records effectively track pupils' progress and indicate that this position is set to continue. However, performance in writing is not as high as in reading, mathematics or science. Senior leaders have already identified this issue accurately. The response has been to improve pupils' understanding of how texts are constructed, so they will want to write more effectively for themselves. Indications are that this approach is beginning to meet with success as recent challenging targets have been met.

Care, support and guidance are strong and support pupils' good personal development, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural aspects, effectively. Pupils' knowledge of how to stay safe and healthy is good. Close links with organisations in the community are helping them to grow in awareness of their environment. For example, they planted trees in the local countryside. Such highly regarded activities are also very effective in encouraging pupils to use initiative and to develop their self-esteem. This, taken together with links with parents and local support services, means that partnerships for promoting pupils' well-being are good. Nearly all pupils say that they enjoy school. Behaviour is good and, when asked, pupils explain that it is much better now than it was. Nearly all of them say that they prefer it this way, as they want to learn. Attendance is around average and arrangements to promote and monitor it are satisfactory. The curriculum is also satisfactory. It is sufficiently broad, balanced and relevant to meet most pupils' learning needs. However, planning does not always ensure that pupils know explicitly when ideas and skills learnt in one subject are applicable to another.

Governors understand the school's strengths and weaknesses well. They work effectively with senior leaders. Good value for money is achieved. The recent track record of rapid improvement indicates that prospects for further strong development are good.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve pupils' understanding of how to hone and develop their skills in writing, so their performance matches that in reading, mathematics and science.

- Improve curricular planning to encompass and indicate links between knowledge and skills in all areas of the curriculum.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Children enter the school with standards that broadly match those expected for their age. Good teaching and learning mean that their progress is good. By the end of Reception, standards remain within the broadly average range. However, a higher proportion performs beyond the goals normally expected for their age than was the case earlier in the year. Achievement is therefore good. Good progress and achievement are also evident throughout the rest of the school. Towards the end of Year 2, standards in English, mathematics and science are often a little above average, which is reflected in end of year assessments. In 2006, results of Year 6 tests were above average in English, mathematics and science, although not quite as good in writing as in the other subjects. The school's own records and pupils' current work indicate that these results are sustainable in the future. However, in 2004, standards were nowhere near as high as now. Results of tests were well below average. Good leadership and management and the introduction of new teaching initiatives have reversed this position remarkably quickly. The improvement was well underway in 2005, when results began their upward trend. Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities are supported effectively and nearly all make good progress towards individual targets.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is good. Pupils develop into lively and confident young people, whose relationships with adults in the school and each other are very good. They enjoy coming to school and are proud of its improvements. During lessons and at other times, they behave well and work hard. Pupils' contribution to life within the school and local community is good. For example, they play an active role in village events, such as Remembrance Sunday and the Thorpe Christmas Festival. Pupils' awareness of local culture and British heritage is good. While their knowledge of other cultures is satisfactory, it is not as strong. This is a feature that the school plans to improve, by establishing links with a rural school in Kenya. Through their newly re-constituted school council, pupils organise fundraising events for their chosen charities. They also made their own decisions about new climbing apparatus for the playground. Attendance is average. Pupils know how to achieve a safe and healthy lifestyle. Most of them participate in at least one of the additional activities that are held outside the normal school day. Their impressive personal qualities, their spark and desire to 'make a difference', coupled with their good basic skills, stand them in very good stead for life beyond school.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are good in all stages, including Reception. Typically lessons are well planned to meet the full range of pupils' needs, which includes those with learning difficulties. Most lessons proceed at a lively pace and often make use of artefacts and resources to provide good practical experience. This means that pupils are interested in what they do, which contributes to their good concentration. In turn, good progress results. That said, lessons seen during the inspection occasionally fell below this usual good quality. On such occasions, it was because resources were of poor quality. An example was when torches failed to work properly during a science lesson and the pace of teaching and learning then slowed down. A recently introduced scheme ensures that pupils are taught at the correct level for their age and ability. This also ensures that pupils' skills build up progressively so learning is secure. Teaching assistants understand their role well and support pupils effectively, especially in the case of those with learning difficulties.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum provided by the school is satisfactory and has some good features. All areas of learning are planned effectively in Reception. In Years 1 to 6, the subjects of the National Curriculum are planned with sufficient breadth and relevance to meet pupils' needs, although provision for those with particular gifts and talents is relatively limited. Teaching is rightly focused on literacy, numeracy and science, with particular emphasis on the development of writing. However, this focus has meant that opportunities are sometimes missed to link the skills and knowledge acquired in one subject to what is taught in another. This means that pupils do not always understand when to apply their knowledge to advantage. From Year 2 onwards, French is provided which, added to a good range of day trips, residential visits, visitors and after-school clubs, provides good enhancement to learning. An effective social and health education programme has a positive influence on pupils' personal development.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Care, guidance and support for pupils are good. Procedures for child protection and health and safety are well established. Links with specialist agencies ensure that pupils receive good support when required. Systems for monitoring pupils' personal and academic development are effective and are reflected in pupils' good achievement. Pupils' progress is tracked through the school effectively and is leading to timely intervention when pupils are at risk of underachievement. Teachers mark pupils' work effectively, offering targets that tell what they need to do to improve their work. Pupils are also given opportunities to assess their own work and that of their classmates.

Support given to pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities is good and meets their needs well.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good. Careful monitoring and the introduction of new teaching methods have resulted in strong, sustainable improvement over the past two years. Frequent checking ensures that pupils' progress is maintained at good rates. Subject leaders understand how to keep track of individual pupils' targets. They work with all staff to ensure that teachers have useful information, so these targets are met.

Just after its last inspection in 2002, when the school was identified as good, it passed through a difficult period that caused a temporary drop in performance. This has been rectified effectively as a result of the drive from senior leadership over the past few years, including that of the present headteacher, together with governors and other senior leaders. As a result, learning, progress and achievement are good throughout the school. Based on this record and accurate self-evaluation of what needs to be done next, the school has a strong 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	2
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	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?	2
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.

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

7 February 2007

Dear Children

Rolph Church of England Primary School, High Street, Thorpe-le-Soken, CO16 0DY

Thank you for being so friendly and willing to speak freely to Mrs Smith and me when we visited your school. You helped such a lot to make the two days go smoothly. We enjoyed seeing your work. It is great that so many of you told us that you like school and that your teachers teach well and care for you well while you are there. We agree with you about these things.

We also enjoyed talking to the school councillors at our 'working lunch' together. We agree with them that your school is good and that your work is of good quality and getting better.

Here are some more good things about your school

- The way that you cooperate with your teachers and each other is good.
- Your behaviour, especially in lessons, is good.
- Your lessons are often practical and are well planned.
- It is good to know that so many of your parents like your school.
- Your headteacher and other senior staff have lots of ideas for the school's future and many good changes have already been made.

Here are some things for your headteacher, teachers and school governors to do next

- Help you to improve your writing skills.
- Show you how things that you learn in one subject can be used in others.

I hope that you will get on very well in the future and that you will always be proud of your school.

Yours sincerely,

John William Paul

(Lead Inspector)