



Rowanfield Infant School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 115592
Local Authority Gloucestershire
Inspection number 290266
Inspection dates 17–18 October 2006
Reporting inspector Christine Huard

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

Type of school	Infant	School address	Alstone Lane
School category	Community		Cheltenham
Age range of pupils	4–7		GL51 8HY
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01242 515334
Number on roll (school)	212	Fax number	01242 515334
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Diane Wright
		Headteacher	Alison Cobb
Date of previous school inspection	1 November 2002		

Age group 4–7	Inspection dates 17–18 October 2006	Inspection number 290266
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This is an average sized infant school in Cheltenham. It serves a mixed area of local authority flats and houses and some privately owned properties. There is a high percentage of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities. Attainment on entry is well below average and particularly low in personal development and speech, language and mathematical skills.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Rowanfield is a satisfactory and improving school and provides a sound education for its pupils. The school's motto of 'Learning together we can achieve great things' is aspirational and beginning to be reflected in the way in which staff, parents and the local community are becoming involved in the education of the pupils. Parents are very pleased with the school; one comment, 'Our child is thriving in its inclusive and encouraging environment', is similar to many others made. Pupils' personal development and well-being are good. The pupils enjoy school. This is illustrated by their good attendance and their enthusiastic participation in lessons. Behaviour is good and pupils readily take on responsibilities such as serving on the school council.

Standards are rising and pupils' achievement is improving. Children in the Reception classes make good progress because teachers show a good understanding of individual needs. Overall, pupils achieve satisfactorily although standards in reading, writing and mathematics are below average. Progress in mathematics has been good over the last year. Progress in reading and writing has been satisfactory. There are weaknesses in pupils' writing because there is too little emphasis on consistently promoting basic skills such as punctuation and the spelling of simple words. The current focus on learning letter sounds is starting to remedy the latter but it is too soon to judge the effectiveness of this. In addition, the performance of boys has not been as good as girls'. The curriculum is satisfactory and the school is beginning to identify strategies that will help to improve the motivation and achievement of boys, such as inviting the local firemen to hear boys read. However, the curriculum has not been sufficiently adapted to include activities that would engage the interests of boys in order to encourage them to read and write more readily. There is a good range of activities and visits to make topics more relevant to pupils.

Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. Pupils enjoy positive relationships with their teachers and interact well with them. Their progress is carefully monitored in all key areas, and targets are set and regularly reviewed. The care, guidance and support given to pupils are good. They find the teachers helpful and approachable. Pupils feel safe from bullying and like the security of the 'worry boxes' in the classrooms where they can express their concerns, anonymously if necessary, knowing they will be sorted out. Leadership and management are satisfactory. The headteacher and senior management team provide clear direction to the school. They know how well the school is doing and inspectors agreed with their self-evaluation of the school. Information from data is used appropriately to identify specific areas for improvement so that all pupils can perform to their potential. Suitable action has been taken to improve standards in mathematics but more needs to be done to improve writing and the achievement of boys.

What the school should do to improve further

- Provide more focus on basic skills such as spelling and punctuation in order to raise standards in writing.

- Ensure that the curriculum and teaching contain activities to fully engage the interests of boys in order to raise standards in their reading and writing.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Children in Reception make good progress and achieve well although they do not have all the skills expected, particular in literacy and numeracy, when they move into Year 1. Standards at the end of Year 2 are below average overall although pupils achieve satisfactorily. Standards in mathematics have risen significantly in the last year and pupils' progress has been good because of the action taken to improve their problem solving skills. Although standards in writing rose in 2006, spelling and punctuation require further improvement. The school's own analysis shows that boys' achievement in reading and writing is not as good as the girls'. Although it is beginning to think of strategies that will ensure that boys are more engaged in the activities planned, this has not been systematically tackled in all subjects. Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities make good progress towards their targets because they receive effective support both in and out of the classroom.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' personal development and well-being are good. Relationships between adults and pupils are positive, and pupils know that staff have their best interests at heart. Self-esteem is promoted strongly and, consequently, pupils feel safe and secure. They enjoy school, behave well and are keen to learn. As one parent commented, 'My daughter is always keen to go to school as she enjoys it so much.' Attendance is good and has been steadily rising over the last three years although the punctuality of some pupils could be improved. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Spiritual development is well promoted, and pupils work together amicably and understand the difference between right and wrong. They respond positively when given responsibility, for example some pupils have helped to interview new staff. Pupils are often involved in community activities and there are sound opportunities for pupils to engage in collaborative activities and problem solving, which will hold them in good stead for the future. Pupils have a good understanding of the need for a healthy lifestyle and eagerly describe the delights of the 'trim trail' when expressing the necessity of exercise.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory overall. Teaching and learning are good in Reception and activities are imaginative and exciting and show a good

understanding and awareness of the needs of individual children. Test results show that teaching in mathematics has improved. The school recognises the need to improve the teaching of writing and find ways of engaging the interest of boys in the activities provided. Teachers generally provide clear explanations and, consequently, pupils are able to tackle their tasks with confidence. Pupils benefit from working collaboratively and discussing their ideas with others. Teaching assistants give good support particularly to pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities. Marking is satisfactory but does not focus sufficiently on what pupils need to do to improve their spelling and punctuation, and this restricts their learning.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum is satisfactory overall. That for children in the Reception class is good, and provides a wide range of activities, which meets the many needs of the pupils. In Years 1 and 2, pupils receive a broad curriculum, which takes appropriate account of the school's priorities to raise standards in reading and writing. However, planning does not systematically identify activities across the curriculum, for instance in information and communication technology (ICT), that may particularly interest and motivate boys. There is a good programme for pupils' personal development, which includes education about the safe use of medicines, and sex and relationships, at an appropriate level for their age. Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities are well supported in the classroom and targets on their individual education plans are sharply focused on how pupils can improve. The school makes work relevant for the pupils by incorporating visits and visitors into the topics planned. There is a good range of clubs out of school time, which the pupils enjoy.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The care, guidance and support provided for pupils are good. The school values all pupils as individuals, and staff are dedicated to their well-being. As a consequence, pupils are well looked after and find it easy to talk to staff if they have any problems. The school works very effectively with parents, and has their trust and confidence. Pupils with learning difficulties are identified early and the good support they receive enables them to make good progress. Effective procedures ensure the health and safety of pupils. In addition, the good links established with a range of outside agencies have a positive impact on pupils' welfare and progress. Teachers support pupils' personal development effectively and this helps them to thrive. Systems for checking pupils' academic progress are satisfactory and improving. As a result the school is beginning to identify more effectively areas requiring improvement.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The leadership and management of the school are satisfactory. The headteacher provides clear direction for the school and she has a strong vision, which is firmly focused on raising standards. She has introduced a system whereby all staff have some leadership responsibilities and this has engendered a strong feeling of teamwork amongst all staff members. Senior staff have a clear understanding of what the school needs to do to improve and are taking appropriate actions to bring this about. The impact of changes to improve mathematics in the school is evident in the 2006 test results. Although standards in reading and writing improved in 2006, more needs to be done. However, there is a sound capacity for further improvement. Subject leaders fulfil their role satisfactorily, but their role in checking standards and identifying what can be done to remedy weaknesses is not yet sufficiently developed. The governors are supportive of the school. They have a sound understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses and are becoming more involved in strategic planning and school evaluation. The school is beginning to use data appropriately to check its own performance. For example, reading and writing have been identified as concerns, and training for the staff has been set up to remedy this. There is sound monitoring of planning, lessons and pupils' work which assesses the quality of teaching and learning in order to ensure that pupils make appropriate progress. The school listens carefully to the views of parents and pupils and takes action to respond to their concerns where appropriate.

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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?	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	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	2
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	3

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.

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 for the warm welcome you gave us when we visited your school. You certainly seem to be very happy and it was good to hear how you enjoy your work and all the extra activities in which you are involved. We think your school gives you a sound education and is working hard to make it even better than this. This is what we thought about your school.

- What we think your school does well:
 - You behave well and are really keen to learn.
 - You take very seriously the importance of eating healthily at school and taking physical exercise.
 - Children in Reception have an exciting curriculum with lots of interesting activities.
 - The teachers and staff take good care of you while you are in school.
 - Your headteacher leads the school well and knows what must be done to make it even better.
- What we have asked the school to do to improve:
 - Children in Years 1 and 2 need more help to improve their writing.
 - We think that the school could provide boys with more activities that really interest them, so that they improve their reading and writing.

We are glad you enjoy your school and hope you will continue to work hard.