



Rectory Farm Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 121940
Local Authority Northamptonshire
Inspection number 292270
Inspection dates 8–9 November 2006
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	Rectory Farm Road
School category	Community		Northampton
Age range of pupils	4–11		NN3 5DD
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01604 411820
Number on roll (school)	207	Fax number	01604 414748
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Christine Dacosta-Ryan
		Headteacher	Michael Snelson
Date of previous school inspection	1 March 2001		

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Rectory Farm is a single form entry school. It changed status to primary in September 2003 and has had two Year 6 cohorts. The proportion of pupils who experience learning difficulties and disabilities, including those with a statement of special educational need, is above average and a significant number of pupils experience social and economic disadvantage. The school holds the Healthy Schools Bronze Award and is seeking recognition as a centre for sport and physical education.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 4

In accordance with section 13 (3) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires significant improvement because it is performing significantly less well than in all the circumstances it could be reasonably expected to perform. The school is therefore given a Notice to Improve. Significant improvement is required in relation to standards and achievement by the time pupils leave in Year 6.

Although improving, the school does not currently provide an adequate education. As children enter the school, their attainment is often below what is normally expected. Children make good progress through the early years and provision in the Reception class is good. By the end of the year, a clear majority of children usually reach the expected goals for their age. By the end of Year 2, standards are broadly average. This represents good achievement in relation to pupils' low starting points. However, this good start is not sustained. By Year 6, standards are well below average in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science. Pupils are not sufficiently adept in the literacy and numeracy skills that they will need as they grow up and move to the next stage of education. In 2006, national test results were even lower than in 2005. They were exceptionally low in mathematics and science. This represents inadequate achievement. While the school's records show much improvement this term in science, standards remain low in English and mathematics.

Until recently, procedures for keeping a check on pupils' progress and then using the information to adapt teaching were not good enough. This means that gathering necessary information about progress has been slow. As a result, teaching of older age groups was not consistently sharp or focused enough to meet pupils' learning needs, whether they were of higher or average ability. The school's own evaluation indicates that significant amounts of unsatisfactory teaching occurred. The present low standards of achievement are the result of that. Due to effective leadership and improvements in the use of assessment there is now no inadequate teaching but the full impact has yet to be felt. The school's capacity to improve is therefore satisfactory. The overall quality of teaching and learning is now adequate, although it remains better in classes for younger pupils. Pupils, however, have much lost ground to make up.

The satisfactory curriculum contains a good emphasis on physical education, both during the school day and outside it, which reflects the school's aim to become recognised as a centre for sport. Out of school clubs contribute much to pupils' good personal development, which is much stronger than their academic achievement. Many pupils take part in the sports and after school opportunities that are provided, understanding that physical education helps them to keep fit. A large majority say that they enjoy school and feel safe, which is linked to the good personal support offered by the staff. While it is improving, academic support is not as strong so, overall, care, guidance and support are satisfactory.

What the school should do to improve further

- Increase rates of progress and improve standards, particularly between Years 3 and 6.
- Ensure that all teaching takes full account of assessment information and pupils' prior knowledge.
- Make certain that the drive from leadership fully ensures procedures for assessing and tracking progress are brought to full effectiveness as soon as possible.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 4

The 2006 assessments of Year 2 pupils' work, in reading, writing and mathematics, indicate that standards are broadly average. However, by the time pupils leave in Year 6, standards are too low, because pupils do not make enough progress from Year 3 to Year 6. Results of the 2006 national tests indicate that performance in mathematics and science was exceptionally low and it was well below average in English. In mathematics, only one in three pupils reached the normally expected level for their age. The most important reason for poor achievement is that past weaknesses in assessment of performance led to a poor match between teachers' planning and pupils' learning needs. This led to inadequate teaching. Recent improvements in teaching mean that pupils are doing better in reading and science, although their writing and mathematics are still not good enough. Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities make satisfactory progress towards their targets because they benefit from good support.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is good. Attitudes to learning are positive, although a few pupils complain that their work is easy or that they are not given 'enough jobs to do'. Behaviour in lessons and playtimes is good. Pupils are well aware of the feelings of others and, as one pupil explained, 'If it makes you sad, it will probably make someone else sad, so don't do it.' They also explain how a diverse range of activities and events, such as singing in assemblies, running around outside in the wind and video clips on germination in science, can make you feel good. The acceptance of commonly agreed school rules is strong, making for a harmonious community of which pupils are proud. They appreciate the school's good range of cultural and multicultural experiences. These are apparent in the good displays of artwork and range of musical activities. Several pupils explained convincingly that bullying and racism are not common in their school. They are confident that such behaviour would be dealt with seriously. They are proud of their school council and what it does. However, attendance is below average, often because of family holidays taken during term time. Procedures to monitor absences are satisfactory.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching and learning are satisfactory and are improving in response to measures taken by the leadership of the school. However, in Reception and Years 1 and 2, teaching is often good. In these classes, it is typified by good explanations of what is expected and what pupils are to learn. Teachers reinforce this information frequently and employ a bright, pacy approach. Pupils are interested and understand what is important in order to make progress. While teaching from Year 3 on has clearly improved, these good features are not so often apparent. The quality of teaching and learning is more typically satisfactory than good or better. That said, an example of outstanding teaching was observed. This lesson, featuring mental mathematics, enthused pupils. The teacher was very clear about why pupils would play the 'Countdown mathematics game' and presented it very confidently. By the end of the session, pupils clearly understood the explicit points of learning that had matched their needs. However, despite improvements, not enough teaching in Years 3 to 6 includes such a clear focus on what pupils are expected to learn. It is therefore not always sufficiently clear what the extent of pupils' achievement has been. This does not combat past underachievement.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum is satisfactory. Throughout the school, work is adapted well to support pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities. As a result, their progress towards their targets is consistently sound. Work, however, is not so well matched to the needs of other pupils in Years 3 to 6. Since the last inspection there has been significant improvement in facilities, resources and the match of the building to the requirements of pupils' learning. Improved provision for information and communication technology (ICT) is an important example. A strong emphasis on sport and music is raising pupils' appreciation of school. Residential trips and the many clubs enrich learning opportunities. The school has received awards from 'Healthy Schools' and also for the quality of its library - which has contributed to recent improvements in reading.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Care, guidance and support are satisfactory. Pastoral needs are met successfully. Parents and their children comment on how pleased they are with this aspect of the school's work. Mentoring support ensures good communication with parents and helps to build trusting relationships with pupils. Arrangements for health and safety and child protection meet statutory requirements. Recently introduced systems to explain targets to parents and pupils alike are beginning to help pupils in their understanding of how to improve their work for themselves. Nevertheless, the newness of these

approaches means that not all pupils can explain their targets convincingly. A range of interventions, based on recently introduced academic assessment, is starting to produce improvement in standards. This is particularly apparent in the sharing of targets with parents and pupils. However, it is too recent to be fully effective in all subjects.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Leadership and management are satisfactory. School leaders have a mostly accurate picture of what the school does well and what needs to be improved, although they have an overly positive view of the school's overall effectiveness. They have been successful in creating a positive learning environment where pupils are keen to do well. They have been less effective in ensuring pupils make as much academic progress as they could. Recent developments in the analysis of pupils' achievement and the monitoring of teaching and what is taught, are beginning to produce a sharper focus on raising standards. However the delay in introducing such measures has meant that the progress, especially of older pupils, has been held back. Nevertheless, things are beginning to move more quickly and the school has a satisfactory capacity to improve. The headteacher and governors are successful in building a staff team with a shared commitment to school improvement.

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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?	4
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	3
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	No

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	4
The standards ¹ reached by learners	4
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	4
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	3
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	3
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	4

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?	3

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	4
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	4
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?	Yes

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Thank you for being so polite and helpful when Mrs Forster and I visited your school. We enjoyed meeting you and talking to you about your work and interests. Mrs Forster also enjoyed meeting the School Council. It was good to hear so many of you say that you like school.

The school is already changing for the better but it is not yet doing enough to make sure that you all do as well as you should. We are asking the staff and governors to make some more improvements and we are recommending that the school gets some extra help over the next year.

- Some of the things that we like about your school:
- You make good progress in your earlier years in the school.
- Nearly all of you behave well in lessons and around the school.
- Your teachers care for you well, which helps you to feel safe at school.
- There are lots of interesting clubs and activities for you before and after school and at lunchtime.
- You know a lot about how to keep fit and healthy.

- Here are the things that we would like done next:
- Increase the progress you make as you move up the school in Years 3 to 6 so you get even better.
- Make sure that in all lessons, it is always made clear what you are expected to learn so that both you and your teacher can see how much you have learned by the end of the lesson.
- Make sure the school knows how well you are doing all the time

We hope that you will continue to enjoy school and that you will help your headteacher, the staff and the school governors to improve your work further.