



Richard Clarke First School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 124052
Local Authority Staffordshire
Inspection number 292874
Inspection date 29 January 2007
Reporting inspector Susan Walsh

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

Type of school	First	School address	School House Lane
School category	Community		Abbots Bromley
Age range of pupils	4-9		Rugeley WS15 3BT
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01283 840206
Number on roll (school)	106	Fax number	01283 840206
Appropriate authority	The local authority	Headteacher	Sharon Kelly
Date of previous school inspection	2 October 2002		

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

Richard Clarke First School is a small, popular school serving a relatively affluent village on the outskirts of Uttoxeter. Almost all the pupils are of White British heritage. The proportion of children with learning difficulties and disabilities is well below the national average. A new headteacher was appointed in January 2005.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Richard Clarke First School is a good school that is continuing to improve. Parents are delighted with the school, typically praising the 'happy and warm atmosphere'. There is good leadership and management and the headteacher has been instrumental in bringing about many important improvements. Staff are eagerly embracing new ideas and are very keen to improve even further. They are behind the headteacher's huge commitment and exciting vision. The school has a good ethos with a very strong sense of community. Pupils' personal development is good and this is reflected in their good behaviour. Pupils' personal needs are well catered for and as a result they enjoy school and feel very safe and secure. The curriculum is good. Good provision for basic skills has contributed to improvements in achievement and pupils enjoy a wide range of clubs that support their personal development.

Improved provision in the Reception class has ensured that children get off to a good start and, by the time they enter Year 1, their standards are above average. In 2006, standards at the end of Year 2 were average. These pupils commenced Year 1 with standards that were broadly average and made satisfactory progress through Years 1 and 2. Actions taken by senior leaders, including a strong focus on improving the quality of teaching in reading and writing, have subsequently accelerated the rate of progress. Standards in Years 2 and 4 are now above average, and pupils' achievement through school is good but not always consistently so. This is because, although teaching is good overall, it is not as lively and challenging in some year groups as in others. Progress in mathematics, although good, does not quite match the brisk progress seen in English.

Care, guidance and support are good. Pupils' progress is now carefully tracked and these new procedures have helped raise teachers' expectations and ensured that support is carefully targeted. This has been an important factor in accelerating progress and raising standards. The systems for setting targets have improved but teachers do not always make effective use of these when they are marking work. Support for pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities is good.

The school has an accurate picture of what it is doing well and of those areas where further improvement is needed. Recent improvements, including those to teaching and achievement, demonstrate the school's good capacity to improve.

What the school should do to improve further

- Use the strategies that have been so successful in accelerating achievement in English to enhance achievement in mathematics.
- Share the best practices in teaching to ensure that all lessons are lively and challenging.
- Improve the quality of marking so that pupils are clear about how well they are achieving their targets.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils start the Reception year with standards that are broadly average and make good progress because of good teaching and a good curriculum. Standards at the end of Year 2 had been above average for many years but they dipped in 2006 and were similar to the national average. This was partly because of the increased proportion of pupils with learning difficulties. Standards at the end of Year 2 are now rising and are above the national average. The school's focus on writing has resulted in pupils making particularly good progress in this area. By the time pupils reach Year 4, many are producing very lively, interesting, imaginative stories and have made good gains in the quality of handwriting and the accuracy of spellings and grammar. Standards and achievement in mathematics do not quite match those seen in English. The quality of presentation is more variable in mathematics and pupils produce smaller quantities of work.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

All aspects of pupils' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, are good. Pupils gain confidence and many are very self-assured. Pupils enjoy coming to school and they attend regularly. Pupils work very hard in lessons and are particularly enthusiastic about practical and active subjects such as art and design and physical education. Occasionally, when introductions are a little dull or they have been sitting on the carpet for too long, their attention starts to waver but generally their concentration is very good.

Behaviour in lessons and around school is good. Pupils are sensible and trustworthy. Playtimes are enjoyable and pupils say they like 'how children play together.' Pupils readily explain about how to keep healthy and know what they should do to keep safe. Pupils make a good contribution to the school through the school council and taking on responsibilities. They are also very involved with the wider community taking part in village activities. Pupils' sensible attitudes, combined with good academic standards, ensure that they are well prepared for their futures.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Whilst most teaching is good, and some lessons are very good, there is a variation in the quality. This is reflected in pupils' progress, which is sometimes not as quick as it could be because teaching is not sufficiently exciting or demanding. In most lessons, better tracking of progress has raised teachers' expectations and supported effective planning that ensures that the work set meets pupils' needs. The teaching of English is now very good but teachers' expectations are not always quite so high in

mathematics. Teachers have very good relationships with pupils and this helps pupils to develop confidence. Information and communication technology (ICT) is used well to make lessons more interesting. Hard working support staff make a good contribution to learning, particularly for those pupils who need extra support.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The school has developed a broad and well balanced curriculum that meets pupils' needs and interests well. Good provision in the Reception year ensures that children make good progress in all areas of learning. From Year 1 to Year 4, there is good provision for developing basic skills, particularly reading and writing. There is also an appropriate focus on creative elements and on geography, history and physical education, which promotes pupils' well-being and enjoyment. Improved planning ensures that work in one year builds on that completed in the previous year and supports the pupils in making good progress. Provision for ICT is good. There is a good range of extra-curricular clubs that are enjoyed by pupils and appreciated by parents. The range of visits and visitors are satisfactory but a number of parents said that they would like to see more.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Good care and support contribute significantly to pupils' enjoyment of school, their good personal development and academic progress. Procedures to guarantee the pupils' welfare are very thorough and well implemented. Vulnerable pupils are quickly identified and effectively supported. Warm relationships underpin the school's work. Parents say that they find staff very approachable and willing to discuss concerns. They recognise that teachers have 'a great understanding of pupils' needs'. This has come from rigorous monitoring of pupils' achievement. The process of setting targets is improving but progress towards those targets is not always made clear to pupils when their work is marked. Support for pupils with learning difficulties is good and in particular the strategies for supporting those with dyslexia are developing well.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Good management by the headteacher has created a strong team of teaching and support staff who are making a very significant contribution to school improvement. Good quality monitoring and evaluation has ensured that areas of weaknesses have been identified and have been rigorously addressed. For example, strategies to improve performance in English have rapidly improved standards in reading and writing. The monitoring of teaching is of good quality and clearly identifies how teachers can improve their practice but some of the judgements can be a little rosy. Governors are very committed to the school and provide good support and appropriate challenge.

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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	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	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

What a delight and a privilege it was to visit your school recently! Thank you for your help during the inspection. You go to a good school and you are right to be proud of it. I know that you will help your teachers to make your school even better. You have such good manners and made me feel very welcome. I enjoyed talking to many pupils around school and was impressed by your good behaviour. I was glad to hear that you enjoy school so much, including the after-school clubs and physical education lessons. You really enjoyed learning how to skip. I hope you like practising your new skills at playtimes.

I was pleased to hear that you feel safe and secure and you told me that your teachers look after you very well. The headteacher is doing a good job in running the school. Your school council is also working very hard to make sure school is a good place.

Teaching is good and I know that you work very hard in your lessons. Standards are getting higher and you are making good progress. I know that many of your lessons are exciting and I have asked your teachers to make sure that all your lessons are interesting. I was pleased to see that you are doing so well in reading and writing. I liked reading your stories! I have asked your teachers to make sure you do just as well in mathematics and to make sure they tell you about how well you are doing with your targets when they mark your books.

I have taken away lots of good memories of your school. Thanks once again for your help.