



# Rattlesden Church of England Voluntary Controlled School

## Inspection Report

**Unique Reference Number** 124711  
**Local Authority** SUFFOLK  
**Inspection number** 293083  
**Inspection dates** 8–9 January 2007  
**Reporting inspector** John Francis

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Primary	<b>School address</b>	Mill Hill
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary controlled		Rattlesden
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–9		Rattlesden IP30 0SE
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed	<b>Telephone number</b>	01449 736335
<b>Number on roll (school)</b>	103	<b>Fax number</b>	01449 737256
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body	<b>Chair</b>	Mr Matthew Riches
		<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs Jane Ash
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	14 January 2003		

<b>Age group</b> 4–9	<b>Inspection dates</b> 8–9 January 2007	<b>Inspection number</b> 293083
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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

## Description of the school

This is a smaller than average first school with a 13 place part-time nursery. The area has higher than average levels of employment. Few pupils come from minority ethnic families and none are at the early stages of learning English. The percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals is low. Attainment on entry to the school is above average and relatively few pupils have learning difficulties or disabilities.

The school has been through an amount of staff turbulence with five headteachers in the last four years and a significant change in staff over this time. The current headteacher started on 3 January 2007.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 3

This is a school with some good features. However, as a result of many changes to the leadership and a drop in standards over time, the school currently provides a satisfactory rather than good standard of education as at the time of the last inspection. Good systems for the care and welfare of pupils results in good personal development and their excellent behaviour and attitudes to work. These are all reflected in the school's friendly ethos, much appreciated and supported by parents. Children in the Nursery settle quickly into school routines. They make satisfactory progress through Reception and by the time they move into Year 1 standards are above those normally found. Satisfactory progress and achievement are maintained throughout Years 1 to 4 and pupils leave the school with above average standards. However, during the many staff changes in school, standards have declined. While they remain above average, there has been a steady drop in attainment in writing and mathematics, particularly for the more able pupils, which has only more recently begun to be reversed.

The curriculum is satisfactory with strengths in extracurricular provision, particularly sport, and in creative development. There are good links with parents and the wider community. Adults provide a good level of care and support for pupils' welfare but there are weaknesses in aspects of guidance. While the targets set for pupils are generally challenging, not all reach these and fulfil their potential. This is mostly because the systems to record pupils' progress over time and identify those who are not progressing at the expected rate are not used effectively. This is reflected in the satisfactory quality of teaching and learning.

While it is not possible to judge the leadership qualities of the new headteacher, generally, leadership, management and governance are satisfactory. The current school improvement plan is detailed and an accurate evaluation of the school's needs but lacks clarity as to how its success will measure and evaluated. However, more recent work is beginning to address the decline in standards and gives the school a satisfactory capacity for improvement and provides satisfactory value for money.

### What the school should do to improve further

- Make more effective use of the system for assessing, tracking and evaluating pupils' progress as they move through the school.
- Identify more accurately what pupils need to know and understand in mathematics and develop an agreed approach to planning.
- Provide better opportunities for pupils to reinforce the writing skills they are being taught.
- Improve the success criteria in the school's improvement plan to give more clearly measurable outcomes.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 3**

Progress through Years 1 and 2 is satisfactory and test results have been consistently above average for seven-year-olds. However, while remaining above average, they have declined over the last three years. This is particularly in the proportion of pupils attaining the higher levels in writing and mathematics. This is now below the national average in mathematics, and is well below in writing. Satisfactory progress through Years 3 and 4 means that by the time they transfer to middle school standards remain above average. However, as in Key Stage 1, a small minority of pupils do not make the progress they are capable of. Pupils with learning difficulties generally make the same rate of progress as other pupils and are well supported by teachers and teaching assistants.

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 2**

The school offers pupils much to enjoy, which shows in their good attendance and their excellent relationships and behaviour. Many children start school with good personal skills and the school builds well on these. Pupils are aware of what they need to do to stay safe and are very considerate to others in school. They say their 'teachers are really nice' and find their lessons are fun. The wide choice of other activities adds to the value they place on school. The school's good advice on healthy lifestyles is received well and the involvement of the school council in things such as moving to healthy lunches and the provision of playground sports equipment show a commitment to a healthier life style.

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good and the school's Christian ethos makes a strong contribution. The opportunities to learn about the diversity of cultures and beliefs in Britain and links overseas helps broaden pupils' outlook. They know they can make an effective contribution through supporting charities and by active participation as school councillors and class monitors. Pupils are confident in taking on responsibilities and, together with the many other skills they acquire, are prepared well for the future. Only in information and communication technology (ICT) are their skills underdeveloped.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 3**

The teachers manage classes well, relationships are excellent and there is a good atmosphere for learning. Teachers have good expectations for work rate and application, while creating many opportunities for pupils to work together and share ideas. However, teaching is not stretching all pupils more than moderately. While challenging targets are set for pupils to achieve, the assessment of their progress, while satisfactory, lacks

the rigour to spur them on to higher achievement. Assessment, as it is currently, does not aid teaching and learning to be better fitted for greater challenges and help pupils to increase their rate of progress. The pupils in Years 3 and 4 are regularly involved in assessing their own progress and success which is helping them to evaluate their own successes. However, the marking of pupils' work generally, while regular, does not always give them sufficient indication of what they should do to improve.

Teachers' lesson planning is satisfactory and provides good opportunities for pupils to work with others at a similar level in their class regardless of their age. However, it does not provide enough opportunities in English or other subjects for pupils to produce longer pieces of writing to apply and reinforce the skills they are being taught.

## **Curriculum and other activities**

### **Grade: 3**

While satisfactory overall, there are a number of strengths in the provision. All subjects are taught as required and the curriculum is generally well planned to ensure progression from year to year. This is an important feature for mixed age classes. To help with this, teaching assistants are deployed well to support pupils, particularly those with learning difficulties. However, there is no whole school agreement on what system is to be used to plan for mathematics. This also, at times, gives a mismatch between what is planned and the actual levels pupils are capable of working at and prevents some from making faster progress.

The school also provides well for creative and practical learning, with art as a particular strength. The Nursery has also been innovative in developing, for example, 'Wellyboot Wednesday' to give these youngest children good opportunities for practical outdoor learning. Pupils are enthusiastic about the extra-curricular provision. A good range of well attended extra-curricular clubs, visitors and visits enrich the curriculum. Good provision is also made for pupils' personal, social and health education. However, the use of ICT is not sufficiently well linked to other subjects and pupils have only limited opportunities to practise and develop their skills. This is a similar picture for writing.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 2**

The school takes the care and welfare of pupils very seriously and there are good systems in place to ensure this. Pupils say they feel safe and secure in school and know that they will be listened to if they are worried or are having problems. As a result of this good standard of care, pupils enjoy coming to school and work hard. Pupils' target books for literacy and numeracy helpfully show them what they need to do to reach the next level and older pupils in particular are clear about what they have achieved and what they need to do to move on. However, weaknesses in the whole school systems used to track pupils' progress limit scope for pupils to increase the rate of progress beyond the present satisfactory level. Pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities are identified early and good support is provided. Parents like the systems in place for the school to share information with them about their children's progress.

Induction procedures for children entering the Nursery class are good and enable them to settle quickly into school life.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 3**

Since the last inspection, standards have fallen and it is only more recently that remedial action has been taken to turn this around. This is, in part, the result of too many changes in leadership along with an almost complete change of teaching staff. The last acting headteacher recognised this and put in place appropriate measures to halt the downward slide in standards. These are already showing some impact through better assessment systems and more challenging targets but have not had time to become fully embedded. The current headteacher has only been in school for a few days but has already begun to identify accurately the school's strengths and main areas it needs to improve.

The governing body is very committed and supportive but often relies too heavily on the interpretation of others. The school's current improvement plan is detailed and accurately identifies the key areas the school needs to work on but too many of the criteria used to judge their success are not clear enough.

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## Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	<b>School Overall</b>
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### Overall effectiveness

<b>How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?</b>	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	No

### Achievement and standards

<b>How well do learners achieve?</b>	3
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	2
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	3

### Personal development and well-being

<b>How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The behaviour of learners	1
The attendance of learners	2
How well learners enjoy their education	1
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

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?</b>	3
<b>How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?</b>	3
<b>How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?</b>	2

<sup>1</sup> 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

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	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**

10 January 2007

Dear Children

Rattlesden First School, Mill Hill, Rattlesden, Bury St Edmunds, Suffolk IP30 0SE

Thank you for making me welcome in your school. I was pleased that those of you I talked with were so keen on school and wanted to share their work and ideas with me. This letter is to tell you what I think of your school and how it can be even better.

You are proud of your school. You told me how much you enjoy school and how you don't like to be absent. You also told me how you all get on well and that everyone in school looks out for and cares for each other. I could see this through your excellent behaviour and the way you play together sensibly. Your teachers use a range of approaches to make your lessons interesting and enjoyable, for example, the way they use the interactive white boards. When I was visiting classes I saw how well you listen to your teachers and do all that is asked of you. Most of you work hard and get good results, but sometimes some of you could do even harder work.

To make your school even better I have asked the teachers to do a number of things. Most of these are not really things you can be involved in as they are more to do with the organisation of the school. They are about the teachers recording carefully how well you are working towards your targets; making sure you can practice your writing skills more, that your mathematics is planned at the right level for you and finally to make the school's improvement plan better so your headteacher and governors know how well the school is doing.

I am sure that Mrs Ash is going to enjoy being at Rattlesden School and work to make it even better and that the teachers will continue to keep your lessons interesting and exciting. You can also help by keeping up your wonderful attitudes and continue to enjoy all you do at school.

Mr John Francis Lead inspector