

Rushall Church of England Voluntary Aided School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	126410
Local Authority	Wiltshire
Inspection number	293552
Inspection date	20 March 2007
Reporting inspector	Kevin Hodge

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	76
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Sharon Prance
Headteacher	Marion Harvey
Date of previous school inspection	9 July 2001
School address	Rushall Pewsey SN9 6EN
Telephone number	01980 630360
Fax number	01980 630360

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This is a smaller-than-average primary school. There is a wide social mix among pupils, but few come from disadvantaged backgrounds. Few pupils come from minority ethnic groups. Children enter the school with levels of ability which are broadly typical for their age, but these levels change widely from year to year. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities is below average. Children are organised into a Reception and Year 1 class, a Years 2, 3 and 4 class and a Years 4, 5 and 6 class.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Rushall is a good school which has improved in recent years. Good leadership and management have enabled the school to raise pupils' attainment and improve the school environment. By the end of Year 2, pupils reach average standards in mathematics and most aspects of English. Pupils' writing is sometimes hampered by weak spelling skills, but their speaking, listening and number skills develop well. As they move into the oldest year groups, these weaker spelling skills are remedied effectively and they reach above-average standards in English, mathematics and science. Pupils, including those with learning difficulties and disabilities (LDD), make good progress and achieve well because the quality of teaching and learning is typically good through the school. The provision in the Foundation stage is good. Children get off to a flying start in the mixed Reception and Year 1 class. Good teaching and interesting practical activities ensure children learn at a good rate, particularly in gaining social skills. All reach and some exceed the expected standards in all areas of learning. Teaching is typically good in the next two mixed-age classes, but the most able pupils in each class are not always set challenges that extend them fully.

Pupils' well-being and personal development are good. Pupils really enjoy school and their behaviour is very good. As one said, 'The good thing about this school is that it's all good!' The effectively planned curriculum is varied and stimulates their interest in learning by providing good links between subjects and promoting good levels of practical work. Pupils' good level of care and guidance is fostered well so that pupils feel able to ask both adults and friends for help if needed. This ensures their health, safety and security. It shows in pupils saying they feel safe and like learning.

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher leads developments well and is keen to make things even better. This has included setting up new assessment systems and plans for pupils to learn a different language. Some aspects of school development are hampered by the few staff having a high number of responsibilities to juggle. Governors support the school well. They are keen to move the school forward, often using feedback from parents to help shape priorities for action. As one parent commented, 'I really feel I made the right move in choosing Rushall'. This reflects the view of the vast majority of parents, who are very pleased with the school.

What the school should do to improve further

- Help pupils in Years 2, 3 and 4 to have more confidence in spelling unfamiliar words to help improve their quality of writing.
- Ensure that the most able pupils in Years 3 to 6 are set greater challenges to extend their skills further.
- Improve the coordination of subjects so that staff have more manageable levels of responsibility.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils achieve well in relation to their starting points. Their progress is good in the Foundation Stage and this generally continues in Years 1 to 6. This is due to effective teaching in mixed-age classes, motivated pupils and an interesting curriculum. In the Foundation Stage, provision is good. All reach, and many exceed, the expected levels when they start Year 1. Standards in

Year 2 are average in reading, mathematics and science but along with pupils in Years 3 and 4, their quality of writing is hampered by weak spelling skills. In the 2006 tests for Year 6 pupils, standards were above average and pupils exceeded their challenging targets. Pupils achieve well in their speaking, listening and mathematical abilities and now in their information and communication technology (ICT) work. Pupils with LDD make good progress in line with classmates, as their needs are accurately identified, addressed skilfully and monitored closely.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils behave very well in lessons and around the school because of the good development of their spiritual, moral and social awareness. They are friendly to visitors and willing help each other, regardless of age differences. This promotes a welcoming 'family feel' to the school. Pupils enjoy school, although their attendance is average, as some parents persist in taking holidays in term time. The school council is enthusiastic and takes its responsibilities to improve the school seriously. Pupils' knowledge of their own culture is good and being involved in local community activities, such as 'villagers' day' and flower show, extends their social awareness well. Their multicultural awareness is more limited and not developed as effectively. Pupils like having simple responsibilities, such as in assembly and being table monitors, and look forward to having 'friendship stops' in the playground. Visits to study local businesses, raising money for school trips, and managing simple budgets help prepare them well for later life. Pupils know about the benefits of exercise and often choose healthy food options. Extra-curricular clubs and regularly planned games activities help extend their activity levels effectively.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Lessons are interesting and one pupil's comment that 'they are fun' reflected the view of many. Activities generally take good account of the mixed ages found in each class. In the Reception class, lively practical work promotes children's natural curiosity and social skills. In the other two classes, teaching is typically good, supported by effective teaching assistants. Relationships are particularly well developed, which means pupils are willing to learn and settle down quickly to work. In the Years 2, 3 and 4 class, activity days held weekly help pupils to develop their independent skills effectively. In the Years 4, 5 and 6 class, well-organised teaching enables pupils to make good progress in basic skills, while developing interesting topic and art work. In both classes, most pupils are given work at the right level, but the most able pupils' academic abilities and thinking skills are not always stretched with more challenging tasks or questions. Teachers know their pupils well and assess their progress regularly. Their marking is good and gives clear guidance about how pupils can improve their work.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum provides an effective step-by-step programme of work for pupils to gain a broad range of skills. This helps them to make good progress in most aspects. It generally caters well for the Foundation stage pupils and mixed ages. A three-year plan ensures that topics are not repeated. The school has recently reviewed how it organises the curriculum so that it can keep a better check on the skills pupils learn. This is most effective in English, mathematics and

science and is now extending to other subjects. Well-thought-out themes cover interesting activities, aided by special focus days. Activities to develop the awareness of those with different backgrounds or beliefs are limited. Work in ICT has improved because of better resources and planning. Pupils' personal development is fostered well by regular class times to discuss issues such as health and relationships. This is supported by a 'life' education bus that visits the school to promote healthy lifestyles. Good modifications to planning cater effectively for pupils with LDD. Extra-curricular activities such as sports clubs help extend pupils activity levels. Regular trips away from school help broaden their experiences effectively.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Pupils' personal development is effective because they receive good levels of care, support and guidance. Pupils get on well with each other and most adults in the school, which contributes to what parents describe as a 'friendly and caring' place. As a small school, great emphasis is placed upon individual needs and care for pupils. This is apparent at most times, but some older pupils rightly say they feel frustrated that their concerns or reasonable requests are not dealt with as sympathetically at lunchtimes. Those with LDD receive high levels of support both from teaching assistants and by drawing upon expertise from outside agencies. This helps these pupils make good progress. Parents receive good levels of information about their children's development through regular meetings. Pupils and parents receive good levels of help to ensure a smooth start to school, and good links are made with secondary schools to ease transfer from Year 6. Closer checks on all pupils' progress is highlighting those who need extra help. The school has recently worked with pupils to agree simple 'I can' targets to help them keep an eye on their progress and direct their efforts.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher, supported by staff and governors, has worked successfully to improve the school in recent times, particularly in enhancing parts of the building and raising pupils' attainment. Changes to the curriculum and assessment routines are beginning to take effect, but are taking time to refine because staff, particularly the headteacher, have to juggle many responsibilities. The school uses self-evaluation very carefully and it includes the views of many, including pupils, who contribute to the annual review of the school's performance. It responds well to concerns such as the changes to transport arrangements and in giving guidance about how parents can support their child's learning. The priorities for improvement are clear and achievable. Improved Foundation Stage accommodation and subject coordination are high on the list. Governors give good support. Some governors are new and are being supported in their roles. Although not fully established, the routines for gathering information are giving governors the necessary insight to help them challenge the school to move forward. The capacity to improve further is good, with the close teamwork in the school being an important factor in raising standards.

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Annex A

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?	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.

Annex A

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

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

I'm writing to let you know about the findings from the inspection we carried out recently. We really enjoyed visiting you. We think that Rushall is a good school that is improving quickly. Your parents and carers agree with us that your school is a caring and welcoming place.

Here are some of the things we found out:

- You make good progress in your work so that by the time you leave you reach better-than-expected standards.
- You are working hard to make the school even better.
- You said you feel safe and all the staff make sure that you do.
- The teachers make lessons interesting and are good at getting you to learn in most subjects.
- Special visits or people who come to assemblies, along with interesting activities in class, make learning fun.
- You all behave very well and the school helps you to be mature and sensible.
- Your help in raising money for your trips and being involved in the 'villagers' day' is really good.
- The headteacher, staff and governors work well together to make the school a enjoyable place to be and for the school to get even better.

I have asked the school to look at these things to improve:

- To help you get even better at your spelling skills to help your writing.
- To ask teachers to give some of you different and harder problems to solve or work on to really stretch your abilities.
- To see if staff responsibilities can be reduced or shared better so that there are not too many things for just one member of staff, such as your headteacher, to do.