



The Richard Heathcote Community Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 132043
Local Authority Staffordshire
Inspection number 293924
Inspection dates 10–11 October 2006
Reporting inspector Marion Thompson

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	The Drive
School category	Community		Alsagers Bank
Age range of pupils	3–11		Stoke-on-Trent ST7 8BB
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01782 720406
Number on roll (school)	175	Fax number	01782 722986
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Rob Jeffries
		Headteacher	Sylvia Rizak
Date of previous school inspection	12 March 2001		

Age group 3–11	Inspection dates 10–11 October 2006	Inspection number 293924
--------------------------	---	------------------------------------

© Crown copyright 2006

Website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This is a small primary school, which re-opened as a Fresh Start school in January 2000, under the leadership of the current headteacher. Almost all pupils are of White British origin and there are no pupils at the early stages of learning English. Children start in the Nursery with the level of skills expected for their age. The proportion of children with learning difficulties and disabilities is below average. In the recent past there have been some staffing difficulties which particularly affected the Year 6 class. The school now has a settled staffing situation, a mix of very new and well-established teachers.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This school provides a good education for its pupils. Significant improvements have been achieved in the last three years. Standards are above average and pupils achieve well, reaching challenging targets. Children in the Nursery and Reception classes get off to a good start because of well-organised provision and good teaching. Standards in reading, writing and mathematics in Years 1 and 2 have risen steadily over recent years and are now above average. Older pupils are now also achieving well. The school has worked hard to improve the understanding of data handling and the standard of pupils' writing. This has resulted in higher standards and good achievement in English, mathematics and science.

Leadership and management are good. Many of the improvements in school result from the excellent leadership provided by the headteacher. She has been supported well by a committed and challenging governing body. Effective systems to monitor, evaluate and improve the work of the school have been put in place. The school ethos is now one of high expectations and care. Having led many developments in the early days, the headteacher has successfully focused on developing the teaching and management skills of other staff, so the school now has good capacity to improve further. Key staff lead confidently on their areas of responsibility.

Good teaching and learning have contributed to improved standards, with some excellent teaching in Year 6 boosting pupils' progress in this year group. Teachers receive very good support and advice, which is helping them to improve their practice rapidly. The quality of marking, however, is inconsistent and does not always provide pupils with sufficient guidance on how to improve the quality of their work. Where this occurs, pupils are not sufficiently aware of the steps they need to take to reach their targets.

Good achievement is underpinned by good personal development and a satisfactory curriculum. Pupils' good behaviour, positive attitudes, good basic skills and growing independence support their learning whilst preparing them well for transition to secondary school. Attendance, which had been improving, was below average last year as a number of pupils missed school to go on holiday. Not enough is being done to discourage families from doing this.

The school ensures that all pupils are kept safe through its good procedures for care, support and guidance. Adults provide a high level of care for pupils and parents praise the 'family' ethos of the school. Many parents share the view expressed by one that 'the warmth and affectionate nature of the school alongside the fostering of independence and the provision of opportunities for learning confirms to us that we have made the right choice for our children.'

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that the quality of marking is consistent and that all pupils are aware of what they need to do to achieve their targets.
- Work with parents and carers to improve attendance.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils, including those with learning difficulties and disabilities, achieve well and by Year 6, standards are above average. Children get off to a good start in the Nursery, with most exceeding standards expected for their age by the end of Reception. Standards in reading, writing and mathematics are above average by Year 2. Recent initiatives have ensured that this good progress is continued for older pupils. Speaking and listening skills develop well throughout the school and contribute to improvements in writing, a key area of focus for the school. Analysis of pupils' work identified data interpretation as an area of weakness in science and mathematics. This has now been successfully addressed. Pupils' skills in using information, communication technology (ICT), an issue in the previous inspection, are now good.

The school sets ambitious targets that it meets or exceeds. Improved attainment is a result of improved teaching and the close monitoring of pupils' progress. The strategies the school has put in place to support pupils' learning are having a positive impact.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' good personal development is a major contributory factor in the good progress they make. From the Nursery onwards, children work confidently because of good relationships with adults, and they are encouraged to become increasingly independent. Pupils love coming to school, because they are treated with consideration. One parent summed up the views of many in saying that 'the children are happy and their views and feelings are taken into account on a daily basis.' Despite this, attendance levels have dropped because of the number of families taking their holidays in termtime. Pupils know how to keep themselves safe and gain a thorough understanding of the importance of a healthy lifestyle. They make a good contribution to the school community by assuming responsible roles such as prefects, playground buddies and councillors. Pupils also contribute to the wider community through, for example, raising money for charity. Their sense of social responsibility, together with their good basic skills, ensures that pupils are well prepared for life beyond school. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. However, their knowledge and understanding of the range of faiths and cultures within Britain is weak.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are good. There is very effective teaching in the Nursery and Reception classes and some outstanding and very challenging teaching in Year 6. Adults have supportive relationships with their pupils, who develop a confident approach to learning. Good attention is paid to developing speaking and listening

skills in all lessons and pupils are encouraged to become increasingly independent. Teaching assistants are effectively deployed to support individuals and groups. Learning objectives and explanations are clear, enabling pupils to settle to work quickly. The quality of marking is rather uneven. In some instances, clear guidance helps pupils to improve their work and they are aware of the steps they need to take to reach their targets. On other occasions, marking is superficial and does not identify what pupils need to work on next.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum is satisfactory and is successful in meeting the learning needs of all pupils, including those with learning difficulties and disabilities. The good quality, imaginatively planned curriculum in the Nursery and Reception ensures that children enjoy a very positive start to their school lives. The development of a good programme for English, mathematics and science has been a priority for the school and this is now in place. The curriculum is enhanced well by the use of ICT. Plans to make the curriculum more creative and to develop more links between subjects are now well under way. A wide range of enrichment activities, include out-of-school clubs, visits and visitors, close involvement with other schools, which all contribute well to pupils' learning and personal development. A strong programme for personal, social and health education also makes a good impact, particularly in pupils' understanding of how to keep safe and healthy.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Care, guidance and support have a positive impact on pupils' personal development and well-being. Pastoral care is outstanding, with every child valued equally. All pupils, including those with learning difficulties and disabilities, are well supported. 'I trust all the teachers,' said one pupil, 'if you've got a problem, there's always people happy to support you.' The school does all it can to keep the pupils safe, as seen in the way that all staff have recently been updated on child protection and first aid.

There are good systems for tracking pupils' progress and these are used well to identify any pupils who need extra support to boost their learning. Individual targets are set for some pupils to help them to become more involved in assessing and improving their own learning, but this practice is not established across the school. In previous years, the school has been vigilant in discouraging parents from taking their children on holiday during termtime, resulting in reduced levels of authorised absence. In the current year, these procedures have slipped and authorised absence has risen.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Good leadership and management by the headteacher, key staff and governors have ensured that, after an unsettled period, pupils are achieving well, and standards are above average. Teaching and learning are improving and key staff have developed the skills they need to perform their roles well. Planning for improvement is good and is based on an accurate evaluation of the work of the school. Responsibilities are delegated well to knowledgeable and enthusiastic subject co-ordinators. Governors manage the budget well, and concentrate their efforts on maintaining the school's strengths and supporting further improvements. They ensure effective systems are in place to keep children safe. The issues raised in the previous inspection have been addressed well and the school is well placed to improve further.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaints about school inspection', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
---	-----------------------

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	3
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?	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?	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

Thank you for making us very welcome in your school and helping us find our way around. It was a pleasure to talk to you and to find out how well you are doing. You told us how much you enjoy school, because of the way the staff look after you and because of the interesting things you do. There are a lot of good things about your school:

-
- It is a good school and it is getting better all the time.
- You make good progress, because your teachers make learning interesting and you work hard.
- Your behaviour is good. You help each other and become very confident and independent.
- You have a good understanding of how to keep yourselves safe and healthy.
- The headteacher has worked very hard and successfully to make this a good school. Other staff and governors are providing her with good support
- Your parents and carers rightly feel the school is doing a good job.

We have asked your school to make sure that when your work is marked you have a better understanding of how to improve. We have also asked teachers to explain to you a bit more clearly the steps you need to take to reach your targets. You may be able to help with the last improvement needed by making sure you are at school every single day, if at all possible.

We hope you will continue to make the good progress you are making now and keep on enjoying your learning.