

Rabbsfarm Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	102408
Local Authority	Hillingdon
Inspection number	307993
Inspection dates	13–14 March 2008
Reporting inspector	Nicola Davies

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	341
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr A Mullins
Headteacher	Mr M J Cassidy
Date of previous school inspection	27 October 2003
School address	Gordon Road Yiewsley West Drayton UB7 8AH
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This is a large primary school with a nursery. The majority of pupils are of White British heritage but just under half are from a range of other ethnic backgrounds. Around a fifth of pupils are bilingual and a small number join the school at early stages of learning English as an additional language. Almost a third of pupils are eligible for free school meals, which is higher than average. The proportion of pupils who join or leave the school other than at normal times is higher than average, as is the proportion of pupils who have learning difficulties and disabilities. The majority of these have difficulties with speech, language and communication or need extra support with reading, writing or mathematics.

The school is fully staffed but has had a relatively high turnover of teachers in the last two years, largely as the result of overseas trained teachers returning to their home countries.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 4

Whilst pupils enjoy school a good deal, there are a number of aspects of the school's work which are unsatisfactory and its overall effectiveness is inadequate. Chief among these is the achievement of pupils. In the last three years, pupils' standards by the end of Year 6 have been significantly below average and in 2007, standards were exceptionally low in both English and science. The progress of pupils has been inconsistent, and for some, inadequate. The school has recognised that achievement needs to be improved and has taken actions which have met with some success. For example, a focus on standards in English meant that pupils achieved well in this subject in 2006. Similarly, with the support of the local authority, the standards and progress which pupils make in mathematics have been improving over time. However, improvements have been inconsistent and too slow. This is because leadership and management have not, until recently, tackled the main difficulties facing the school robustly enough and senior staff have not been sufficiently involved in making and sustaining improvements. Along with the high levels of staff turnover, this has meant that the actions which have been taken, whilst directed at the right areas, have not had sufficient nor consistent impact. Leadership and management are therefore inadequate. 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 reasonably be expected to perform. The school is therefore given a notice to improve. Significant improvement is required in relation to standards and achievement, leadership and management and attendance.

Pupils attending Rabbsfarm Primary benefit from its strong focus on their personal and social development. From their first days, whether in the good Foundation Stage or in the school, girls and boys develop a clear sense of right and wrong. They build good relationships with other pupils and with the adults who teach them. As a result, they try hard to please their teachers and with their work. The committed staff are rightly proud of their pupils' good behaviour, politeness and confidence. Pupils also take their part in improving the school and the local community, through, for example, the school council which represents their views well. Since the time of the last inspection, the school's environment has been considerably improved. It provides pupils with a bright and attractive setting in which they can play and work together safely. This adds to their good enjoyment and uptake of healthy lifestyles.

Despite the challenges facing the school, there is evidence that the lessons of the past have been learned. For example, attendance had not improved since the time of the last inspection and this affected the achievement of a significant minority of pupils who did not attend regularly enough. Since the beginning of this academic year, the school has taken a much firmer line on this. As a result, absence has fallen significantly although the school has yet to convince a minority of parents of the importance of regular attendance. The monitoring of lessons and better use of information about pupils' progress have similarly led to improvements in the effectiveness of day-to-day teaching and assessment. Both of these are satisfactory overall. Current pupils are therefore making satisfactory progress in lessons. The strong aspects of pastoral care provided for pupils are now being strengthened by improved and satisfactory academic guidance. The curriculum is satisfactory and weaknesses in the development of pupils' skills in English and science are being tackled. While there is still not yet enough good teaching to fully overcome inconsistent progress in the past, the school's monitoring of teaching shows that the proportion of good teaching is increasing and good lessons were observed during the

inspection. These successes confirm the school has a satisfactory capacity to improve further and to consolidate these gains.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Parents rightly praise the start their children get in the Nursery classes describing the atmosphere as 'joyful and happy'. They relate how their children settle quickly and happily. Children learn enthusiastically through a range of activities and come home, as one parent described, '...with little gems they have learned that day'. Staff work well to ensure that children transfer easily from the Nursery to the Reception classes. Across the Foundation Stage, children's personal and social development is very good. Children show good levels of independence and concentration in both adult and child-led activities. Both Reception and Nursery classes include opportunities for learning outdoors in the well maintained areas. Children join the Foundation Stage with skills that are generally well below those expected of three- and four-year-olds, and a significant proportion have less well developed language and communication skills. Staff keep clear records of the gains children make which show that most children make good progress to reach the expected levels for their age. Staff have rightly identified that the development of early reading and writing skills is a weaker area. They encourage children's interest in, and enthusiasm for reading and writing well, but in recent years, their attainment in these areas has been below those expected when they start Year 1.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve pupils' standards and progress, particularly in English and science.
- Ensure pupils build their skills consistently as they go through the school by increasing the proportion of good teaching and learning.
- Ensure that senior staff are more involved in the monitoring of teaching and learning to secure a faster rate of improvement.
- Improve attendance.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 4

Standards overall at the end of Year 6 have been significantly below average for the past three years. Within this picture of below average standards, there has been much variability. For example, in 2006, the standards which pupils reached in English were higher than national averages but dipped sharply in 2007 to be exceptionally low. This variability also applies across different subjects: standards in science in 2007 were very low whilst those in mathematics were average and pupils made at least satisfactory progress in mathematics. Many pupils make uneven rates of progress over time and across subjects because of inconsistencies in the quality of teaching. Pupils therefore do not always make satisfactory progress from their starting points and this represents unsatisfactory achievement overall. Inspection evidence and the school's tracking indicate that, whilst some pupils have made satisfactory or better progress this year, there is not yet enough good progress to fully overcome past underachievement.

Pupils who need extra support with learning to read and write or have difficulties with speech and language, as well as those who have emotional and behavioural difficulties, make satisfactory or better progress because they receive good support.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

Pupils feel safe and are convinced that if they have problems staff will help them to sort things out. They are happy and well behaved and show good attitudes to their work. The youngest children and pupils new to the school settle in quickly. School council members undertake their roles very responsibly and understand the issues put forward by their friends. They also encourage other pupils to raise money for charities. They manage their own budget which helps towards new facilities for the playground. Pupils develop a very clear understanding of right and wrong and this underpins their good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. They are also well aware of how to keep themselves healthy and safe. Although improving, attendance is inadequate because a significant minority of pupils do not attend school as regularly as they should. Although pupils make slow progress in the basic skills, the good development of their personal skills ensures that they are satisfactorily prepared for secondary school.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Classrooms are welcoming and stimulating learning environments and relationships between teachers and pupils are good. Teachers manage their pupils effectively so that they are motivated and behave well. In most lessons, activities are based on pupils' prior attainment and on their needs. However, in some lessons, the level of challenge is not high enough to raise the level of pupils' achievements in line with their potential.

There is a good focus on pupils talking in pairs and working in small groups. For example, Year 6 pupils work well in pairs to solve word problems in mathematics. However, few teachers expect children to give extended answers, which limits the gains they make in understanding and communication. Teaching assistants provide effective support for individuals and small groups of pupils. Teachers make effective use of information and communication technology to support teaching and learning, such as when Year 4 pupils worked well in groups to programme a simple robot.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum is broad and work has been undertaken to ensure that it is matched to the interests and needs of pupils. For example, provision for mathematics has been improved by making tasks more practical and engaging. In addition, the school now has a common way of developing pupils' basic reading and writing skills. There is further work to be done to provide pupils with more opportunities for investigation and problem solving in science.

The school successfully develops pupils' interest in, and uptake of, healthy lifestyles including regular fitness breaks in the classroom. A well planned programme of visits, visitors and special weeks adds extra enjoyment and makes a good contribution to pupils' moral and social development.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

This caring school provides good support for pupils experiencing difficulties. It makes good use of its tracking system to identify pupils who need extra help. This is provided through a well organised system of support from school staff and specialist agencies. A nurture group and a learning mentor are just two of its successful approaches. Similarly, provision for pupils at early stages of learning English is thorough and effective. Despite these positive aspects of the school's work, attendance, whilst improving, is still too low for some pupils. Marking, assessment and target setting procedures have been strengthened to provide pupils with satisfactory guidance on how to improve their work.

Leadership and management

Grade: 4

The headteacher and other leaders and managers are working hard with staff to improve the way pupils' progress and performance are monitored and supported. Leaders have set appropriate targets and staff morale is very good. Staff feel valued and are enthusiastic about tackling deficiencies. However, many of the strategies and systems to address weaknesses are relatively recent and it is too early to see consistent and sustained improvement. Until recently, the monitoring of teaching and learning had not been used robustly or regularly enough to identify support for teachers that would improve their practice in the classroom to ensure consistently high standards within and across year groups.

Governors are active, knowledgeable and have recently benefited from the arrival of enthusiastic new members. They are beginning to hold the school to account. However, they remain under strength and therefore struggle to fulfil all of their statutory responsibilities, such as ensuring policies and procedures are fully up to date.

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.

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?	4
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	No
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	3
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	4
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
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?	3
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	4
The behaviour of learners	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	3

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.

Annex A

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	4
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	4
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	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	4
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	4
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

21 April 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Rabbsfarm Primary School, West Drayton, UB7 8AH

It was lovely to meet and talk to so many of you when we visited your school recently. As you know, we also met your school council representatives and they told us a lot about your school. We were pleased to hear from you and your parents that you enjoy school, keep healthy and safe and learn how to be responsible young people. Well done.

We listened to what you and your teachers had to say about the good (and not so good) things about the school. We have judged that the overall effectiveness of your school is inadequate because it needs significant improvement in three main areas. Firstly, not all of you make steady progress as you go through the school and in different subjects. This means some of you make too little progress by the time you leave. Your teachers are working on this and involving you and your parents through the targets they set for you, but this is something the school still needs to work on to make sure that all of you do as well as you should. Most of you are already making better progress in mathematics so we have asked the school to make sure that you achieve better in English and science as well. To do this, the leaders and managers at your school need to support your teachers to make sure that all your lessons are as good as your best ones. We have also asked everyone at the school to improve attendance. Although this has improved recently, some of you do not come to school as often as you could. We know that everyone has been working on this but it is hard for you to do well if you miss school. So you, your parents and the school will need to work together to make sure that all of you attend regularly.

We judged that the school will be able to make these improvements because it has already been successful in some areas, but this needs to be more consistent. Some different inspectors will visit the school again to check up on how things are going. We hope you will be able to show them that you are all coming to school regularly as well as working just as hard and behaving just as well as you do now.

With best wishes

Nicola Davies

Lead Inspector