

Rice Lane Junior School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	104585
Local Authority	Liverpool
Inspection number	308629
Inspection dates	23–24 April 2008
Reporting inspector	Clarice Nelson-Rowe

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	7–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	327
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs J Haywood
Headteacher	Mr M Ledsham
Date of previous school inspection	9 February 2004
School address	Brockenhurst Road Liverpool Merseyside L9 3BU
Telephone number	0151 5253356
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Age group	7–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This is a large three-form entry junior school, set in an urban area of the Warbreck ward of Liverpool. Most pupils are of White British heritage. Of the small number from minority ethnic groups, nearly all speak English as a first language. An above average proportion of pupils are entitled to free school meals and the proportion with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is above the national average. Pupils generally enter school with above average standards, although this does fluctuate from year to year. In 2007, the school achieved National Healthy Schools, Investors in People and Basic Skills awards.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a good school. It provides a good standard of education for its pupils. The headteacher, in partnership with the deputy headteacher, leads and manages the school well. Alongside them, in recent years, very able and well supported subject coordinators have enabled the school to drive forward the priority of improving teaching and raising pupils' achievement. This is reflected in their use of clear and challenging targets to raise standards. The governing body is also effective as it knows the school well and this is aided by, for example, governors' direct links to individual classes. The track record of securing improvement, together with clarity of vision about what still needs to be done, gives the school a good capacity for further improvement.

Until 2005, Year 6 standards were declining but have now risen to around the national average. The 2007 results were the best recorded for the school and, based on the school's assessments of these pupils on entry, achievement is now good. This is because teaching and learning are good and the school is developing its monitoring and tracking of pupils' progress to raise achievement further. However, the school recognises that standards could rise further for some pupils in writing. Lessons are increasingly providing good opportunities for pupils to assess their own work and this is helping pupils to make good improvements, as they are clear about what is expected of them. There are also good practices for marking pupils' work. However, pupils do not consistently know how they can improve. Marking and the good and outstanding features of teaching, have yet to be fully embedded across the school.

Pupils' personal development and well-being are good. Pupils enjoy coming to school; as shown through regular attendance and their take up of the wide enrichment opportunities that the school has to offer. Good relationships exist between everyone in the school and pupils' behaviour is good. They have good awareness of how to live healthily, keep themselves safe and are well prepared for the future. These aspects are supported by the school's Healthy Schools status and the recent award of the Basic Skills Mark for the third time.

All staff have a high commitment to pupils' care, health and safety. This results in pupils who are happy and feel secure. A very close check is kept on the welfare of vulnerable pupils and there are strong links with parents and outside agencies to support its work. An example of how the senior leaders have supported the well-being of pupils is the provision made of funding air conditioning in classrooms, which alleviates the stress of a hot, and compact working environment. This adds to pupils' powers of concentration immensely.

The good curriculum makes a strong contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Pupils learn about caring for others, and about different cultures and global issues around the world. Parents are pleased about the range of visits and the extensive range of activities at lunchtime and after school, which enhances the provision further.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards further in writing for average and higher attaining pupils.
- Ensure that the quality of all teaching and assessment reflects best practice within the school.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils achieve well overall from their starting points. Effective actions taken by the school to improve teaching and assessment are now developing and having good impact. For example, good progress was observed in most lessons, particularly in Year 6. Specific programmes to boost the skills of some pupils who have fallen behind are helping them to make up lost ground at a good rate.

Standards in national tests dipped in 2003–2005 but then recovered between 2005 and 2007 to broadly average. The 2007 results were the best ever on record for the school with some pupils reaching above the national averages in mathematics and science. The rate of improvement has been faster in these two subjects than in English. Writing standards could still be higher for some average and higher attaining pupils.

Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress overall; this is because of the good support they receive.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

The overwhelming majority of pupils behave well. A small number display challenging behaviour but the staff manage this well and there is no disruption to other pupils' learning. Punctuality to school is good and levels of attendance are consistently above the local authority's average and just above the average for schools nationally. Pupils willingly take on responsibility around school and say that their voice is heard, such as through the work of the school council. They have, for example, helped to improve the garden area. Older pupils take on roles as prefects and buddies and help pupils transferring from the adjacent infant school to settle in quickly. Pupils have a good awareness of how to live a fit and healthy lifestyle and, thanks to the school's regular use of external agencies, such as the police and other emergency services, they have a good awareness of personal safety. Pupils consider the needs of others both locally and further afield, when they raise money for charities. They leave school with positive attitudes to learning. One pupil said, 'they help us to believe in ourselves', when referring to team activities during a residential trip to Wales. Alongside such enrichment activities, pupils also demonstrate in lessons good and developing skills of independence and teamwork, as well as basic skills of literacy and numeracy.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The quality of teaching and learning is good. There are examples of outstanding teaching in most year groups and the quality is consistently good, particularly in Year 6. Teachers' enthusiasm and the way learning is made fun, exciting and challenging are key strengths in creating a purposeful atmosphere for learning throughout the school. They also plan well for the different levels of attainment of pupils, make good use of questioning and very effective use of information and communication technology (ICT). For example, in an outstanding music lesson, the teacher made excellent use of software using an interactive whiteboard to help the pupils to record and mix their own performances. When learning is less effective, the pace of lessons is too slow and pupils spend too long listening to the teacher or do not complete enough

work in the time available. Some lessons feature very good use of target-setting, assessment and marking so that staff can check on their progress. This is in the process of full implementation across the school.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The school provides a broad and relevant curriculum that meets the needs and interests of all pupils well. There is a clearly structured plan which ensures that a wide range of activities are undertaken and that there is progression in learning for pupils throughout the school. Through the use of 'themed' events, such as 'Fairtrade' and 'Black history' week, pupils benefit from developing an understanding of different cultures, and awareness of the world around them. A good range of visitors to school, visits and residential helps to make the curriculum interesting and enjoyable. Pupils say they particularly enjoy opportunities to be creative, to play sport and to meet pupils from other schools in tournaments. The school is currently working towards the development of a more creative curriculum.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The care and support provided for pupils are key strengths of the school. All procedures to ensure the health, safety and protection of pupils and the safe recruitment of staff are in place. The school has good systems to promote the regular attendance and punctuality of pupils and provision to help pupils with additional needs, such as those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities or who are learning English as an additional language. A variety of strong links with other schools helps to smooth the transition for pupils as they move into Year 3 and onto secondary schools. The guidance given to support pupils' academic progress through target-setting and marking has been a focus for improvement this year. There is clear evidence that it is having a positive impact on pupils' awareness of what they need to do to improve their work though it is too early to see its full impact.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher, with the good support of the governors and a very strong and effective senior leadership team, has been successful in improving results and building higher expectations. The teamwork of the staff is strong; everybody works hard and pulls together very effectively. There is a good range of coordinated approaches to monitoring, self-review and improvement planning. The school has a very clear and well-grounded understanding of its strengths and weaknesses. The inspectors agree with the school's evaluation of its effectiveness.

Robust and successful action has been taken to improve the quality and effectiveness of subject leaders within the school. They have been given clear and rigorous roles and responsibilities, and see themselves as 'leaders for learning'. They are well supported and now play a very positive role in the strategic development of the school. The school also benefits from good quality administration which ensures its smooth running on a day to day basis. The school has very good relationships with parents and they are very supportive of the school. Appropriate arrangements are in place to meet current requirements for the safeguarding of children. The school gives good value for money.

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
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
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 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	2
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	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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	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

Inspection of Rice Lane Junior School, Liverpool, L9 3BU

This letter is to thank you for helping the inspection team during our recent visit. We came to the school to find out how well you are learning. You made us feel very welcome and told us a lot about your school.

We agree with you and your parents that you go to a good school. You all receive good levels of care and support. We were delighted with your good behaviour and how kind you were in helping one another in class. This makes the school a very special place in keeping you happy, safe and healthy. You really enjoy all the trips and visits and the special weeks where you get to learn about other people around the world.

You are working well and making good progress. This is because the teaching is good and you are keen to learn. We know how well you enjoy lessons when you are working in groups, making things and when the big computer boards are used to help you understand and to create things such as music. We were also pleased to see you thinking about how well you thought you were doing in your work.

Mr Ledsham, Mrs Rowlands and your governors lead your school well. We are sure that it will continue to improve. To help them make it even better, we have asked them to ensure they do two things.

- First, help some of you to reach even higher standards in your writing.
- Second, that all your lessons are always as good as the best and to ensure that your work is always marked well to help you improve further.

We are sure that you will help them by telling them what makes lessons interesting and what helps you to learn.