

Rushcroft Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	105659
Local Authority	Oldham
Inspection number	308908
Inspection dates	26–27 September 2007
Reporting inspector	Susan Walsh

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	200
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mayor Anne Wingate
Headteacher	Mrs J Sheridan
Date of previous school inspection	24 March 2003
School address	Trent Road Shaw Oldham Lancashire OL2 7YL
Telephone number	0161 770 8236
Fax number	01076 291183

Age group	4-11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

The school is slightly smaller than average and serves the local community. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is slightly below the national average. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is also slightly below average although it varies widely between year groups. In the absence of nursery provision children join the school from a very wide range of settings, all having had different experiences and have developed different levels of skills. Recently the school has had to manage significant staff absence, including the serious illness and tragic death of the previous headteacher. The headteacher was appointed in September 2007 after being the acting headteacher for part of the previous year.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Rushcroft Primary is a satisfactory school that makes good provision for pupils' personal development. Parents very much appreciate this, 'small friendly school' where many say that they are, 'always greeted with a warm welcome'. The school has been through very troubled times. Numerous parents commented upon the extremely sensitive way the headteacher managed a very distressing series of events when she was acting headteacher.

Pupils' achievement is satisfactory and standards are broadly average. Children get off to a good start in the Foundation Stage because of exciting activities and good teaching. Activities are closely matched with children's needs. Achievement slows in Key Stage 1 because expectations are not always high enough and higher and middle attaining pupils are set very similar work. In recent years standards declined to a disappointingly low level in Key Stage 1, but they have started to recover in 2007. However, overall standards at the end of Key Stage 1 remain below average and too few pupils are reaching the higher Level 3. In Key Stage 2, more exciting teaching and a better match of work to pupils' abilities enable them to make good progress in lessons. In 2007, pupils reached broadly average standards at the end of Key Stage 2. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make satisfactory progress. The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall and it is improving, but there is not yet enough good teaching to accelerate achievement beyond satisfactory.

Pupils usually really enjoy school. The good humour and interesting lessons in Key Stage 2 bring learning alive. The curriculum is satisfactory, because there is not always enough challenge for middle and higher attaining pupils in Key Stage 1. Parents and pupils appreciate the wide range of clubs, great sporting activities and terrific opportunities in music. Behaviour is good and pupils are polite, well mannered and attend school regularly. Pupils make a very good contribution to the school community through acting as buddies, being on the school council and generally being helpful. They know how to keep healthy and safe and they are very well cared for. The strong links the school has with a local school that has a very high proportion of pupils of Asian heritage makes an important contribution to pupils' understanding of different cultures.

The headteacher has provided very effective leadership successfully steering the school out of very difficult waters. Staffing issues have been mainly resolved. Decisive steps have been taken which have improved the overall quality of teaching. Although some of the most pressing areas for improvement have been dealt with there is still a lot to do. Regular checking on pupils' progress has only just been put in place and this information is not yet consistently used to plan lessons that meet pupils' individual needs or set targets. Pupils are not always told how to improve their work either through marking or the process of setting targets. The headteacher provides particularly strong direction, but leadership and management are satisfactory because the role of subject leaders and other senior leaders in monitoring, evaluating and target setting is not yet fully effective. However, important recent improvements indicate that the school has satisfactory capacity to improve and is poised to move on.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Provision in the Foundation Stage has significantly improved recently. Teaching is of good quality because teachers ensure that the activities planned closely meet children's individual

needs. As a result children make good progress in all areas of learning, including their personal development. Staff have worked closely with the local authority to successfully introduce a new phonics programme which has certainly boosted children's achievement in communication, language and literacy. Children have a great time because activities are exciting and play is combined very successfully with learning. Very good care is taken of children and parents appreciate the good induction procedures that ensure their children settle quickly into school. Although the curriculum is of good quality the school still lacks discrete outdoor provision for the Foundation Stage, although this is likely to be rectified soon. Staff try their very best in the circumstances, but this does restrict the range of activities that can be planned.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the rigour of systems to check pupils' progress and use the information to set targets that are shared with pupils and used to drive progress.
- Ensure that Key Stage 1 teachers' expectations of pupils are raised and that they plan work carefully to meet their individual needs.
- Fully involve a wider range of staff, including subject leaders and other senior leaders, in monitoring, evaluating and target setting.

A small proportion of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next Section 5 inspection.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Attainment on entry varies, but is usually only marginally below average. Children are now making good progress in the Foundation Stage and in 2007 entered Year 1 with above average skills for their age. Over the past few years progress in Key Stage 1 has been inadequate and, in 2006, pupils who started Year 1 with standards that were a little below average achieved low standards by the end of Year 2. The new headteacher quickly recognised this unsatisfactory situation and took steps to improve pupils' achievement through Years 1 and 2. This has resulted in better standards at the end of Key Stage 1 in 2007. However, more able pupils are still not making sufficient progress. Pupils make more rapid progress in Key Stage 2 because teachers' expectations of pupils are higher. In 2007 standards were broadly average at the end of Key Stage 2. The proportion of pupils who reached the expected Level 4 in English was below average, although most made satisfactory progress. Pupils reached average standards in mathematics and above average standards in science. A good proportion of pupils reached the higher Level 5 in English, mathematics and science.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Pupils enjoy many aspects of school, including the clubs, sports, music and most of the lessons, although some of the lessons in Key Stage 1 can be a little dull. This enjoyment is reflected in their good attendance. Pupils work hard in lessons and older pupils in particular want to do well. They often help each other. For example, during a Year 2 lesson when a boy was reluctant to write because he found it hard a girl said kindly, 'Don't worry, I'll help you if you get stuck.' Behaviour is good in lessons and around school. Pupils can get over excited in the playground and become a bit boisterous, but this is controlled well by staff. Bullying is rare and children and parents say that any incidents

are quickly and effectively dealt with. There is a good understanding of how to keep healthy and children make mainly sensible choices about their diet and enjoy taking exercise. Pupils are adequately prepared for making their way in the world. Their positive attitudes will serve them well. They are confident with information and communication technology (ICT) and their literacy and numeracy skills are average, but they have few opportunities to develop enterprise skills.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Although the quality of teaching is satisfactory overall it is much better in the Foundation Stage and Key Stage 2 than in Key Stage 1. In these areas there is a good proportion of lively teaching that interests pupils and some very good use of questioning to check understanding. Relationships between pupils and teachers are good in all key stages and this gives pupils confidence and helps their personal development. Teachers use ICT well to enhance learning and make lessons interesting. Learning support assistants provide good personal support to pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The move to providing in class support to pupils experiencing difficulties rather than taking them out of class is proving successful. Although teaching is improving in Key Stage 1 expectations are still variable. Work is not consistently well matched to pupils' needs and there is insufficient challenge for more able pupils, which is reflected in the low numbers of pupils gaining the higher Level 3.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum has improved since the previous inspection and there is now appropriate time for each subject. There is satisfactory provision for literacy and numeracy and good provision for ICT. However, the curriculum does not provide enough challenge for more able pupils in Key Stage 1. There are too many worksheets, particularly in mathematics, and too few opportunities for pupils to record their own work. The links between subjects are starting to develop in Key Stage 2. During the inspection an historical subject was used to provide stimulus for a drama lesson that resulted in pupils making outstanding progress in their speaking and listening. There is good extra-curricular provision. Open access to music tuition in Year 3 is helping more and more pupils to learn to play a musical instrument. The school's commitment to high quality music is reflected in the super wind band and choir who make a good contribution to the local community.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Good standards of pastoral care contribute significantly to pupils' enjoyment of school and to their personal development. The school is a caring community where relationships between adults and pupils are good. Consequently, pupils feel valued and secure. Vulnerable pupils are very well supported. Parents say that the staff are very friendly and helpful and typically comment on the, 'happy, safe, welcoming environment'. Child protection and health and safety arrangements are in place. The checking of pupils' academic progress is improving, but information is not complete and is not used consistently to plan learning. Pupils are not clear

enough about short-term or long-term targets and the guidance teachers offer pupils through marking is sometimes not precise enough.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The strong leadership by the headteacher has ensured that the school has been able to regain forward momentum after going through very unusual and challenging circumstances where it was very hard to secure improvement. She has been well supported by the governors during this difficult time. The headteacher has quickly gained a very secure understanding of the schools' strengths and weaknesses, but other leaders do not have the same depth of knowledge, which limits their contribution to self-evaluation. Monitoring and evaluation is improving but does not yet involve all school leaders, nor is it sufficiently robust. Close work with the local authority has helped the Foundation Stage to improve to good and is now starting to improve the quality of teaching in Key Stage 1. The school provides satisfactory value for money.

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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?	3
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 effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
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

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	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?	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 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	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

It was a delight and a privilege to visit your school. Mr Cooper and I really enjoyed talking to you all and listened very carefully to what you had to say. You go to a satisfactory school that is getting better all the time! It is clear that you have a good time at school because of all the fun things you have to do. We enjoyed listening to the band practice and were very impressed by your musical skills. You told us that you really like the clubs, especially the sports. It was good to hear that you know lots about keeping healthy and safe. We were very impressed by your good behaviour. You have very good manners and make visitors very welcome indeed. We liked how you go out of your way to help each other and thought that you make a really good contribution to the school community. Well done! You told us that your teachers look after you well and that they always try to help you. Younger children have a great time at school and are doing well because they have exciting lessons.

Teaching is satisfactory. You are making satisfactory progress and by the end of Year 6 you are reaching similar standards to other children, but at the end of Year 2 standards are behind those of other children. We have asked your teachers to help pupils in Years 1 and 2 to make faster progress by making sure that they do work that is interesting and not too easy. We saw older pupils working hard and taking part in lots of exciting lessons and thought your drama work linked to the Second World War was absolutely super.

Your headteacher has had to work very hard indeed recently and we have asked other staff with management responsibilities to help her more. We have also asked teachers to carefully check your progress and tell you clearly what to do to improve your work.

Thank you again for being such good company.

I wish you well for the future.