

R L Hughes Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	106424
Local Authority	Wigan
Inspection number	309122
Inspection dates	23–24 April 2008
Reporting inspector	Denise Shields

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	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	525
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Tom Brennan
Headteacher	Mrs L. Carroll
Date of previous school inspection	18 April 2005
School address	Mayfield Street Ashton-in-Makerfield Wigan Lancashire WN4 9QL
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

R L Hughes is a much larger than average sized school. Pupils come from a wide range of backgrounds. The socio-economic circumstances of the area it serves are broadly average. Almost all pupils are of White British heritage. Eligibility for free school meals is well below average and is lower than at the time of the previous inspection. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below average but is increasing. There are more boys on roll than girls. The school has gained several awards including Investors in People Status, Healthy School Status, Eco School Status (silver), Basic Skills Quality Mark and School's Activemark.

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. Some aspects of its work are outstanding, such as the care, guidance and support for pupils that very successfully underpin the excellent quality of their personal development. The school's exceptionally good partnerships with a wide range of organisations have a significant impact on pupils' all-round education. Provision in the Foundation Stage is outstanding; as a result, children get a first-rate start to their education. The headteacher provides very impressive leadership and management and is very ably assisted by the capable and enthusiastic deputy headteacher. Together with other members of the senior leadership team they are steering everyone in the right direction so that the needs of pupils and staff are at the heart of everything that is done. School self-evaluation is comprehensive and accurate. It is clearly linked to future development planning. As a result, the school knows where improvements are needed and how to bring them about. However, many subject leaders are new to their roles and do not yet play a full part in this evaluation process. They check some aspects of subject areas well, but they do not check on the progress pupils make.

Achievement is good. Children enter the Nursery with skills that are below those typically expected, particularly in communication, language and literacy. Overall standards by the end of Year 6 are above average. However, standards are not as high in English as they are in mathematics and science. Throughout the school, achievement and standards in writing are lower than in reading. The school has started to address the issue and pupils' progress in writing is beginning to speed up. However, it is too early for the impact of this to be reflected in national assessment and test results.

The good curriculum is rich and varied. An outstanding range of opportunities is provided beyond lessons that develop pupils' interests and talents. The use of specialist teaching, for example, in music and French, promotes pupils' enjoyment of learning. Teaching and learning are good. Teachers are adept in accelerating pupils' learning, for example, through posing challenging questions, which extends pupils' skills and knowledge well. Teaching assistants work closely with pupils who find learning more difficult and this ensures they are fully involved in lessons.

'Everyone feels part of the school', is one of the many positive comments expressed by pupils. They say they really enjoy school and this is reflected in their very good levels of attendance. There is an excellent focus on personal, social, emotional and health education. As a consequence, behaviour is outstanding. Pupils' understanding of how to keep safe and live healthy lifestyles is impressive. Their awareness of environmental issues and global citizenship is very good and prepares them well for life as young citizens of the future. Pupils comment very favourably on how safe they feel and know there is an adult they can turn to for help if they should need it. A representative view of many pupils is, 'Our school is here to help everyone.'

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 1

As a result of outstanding teaching and learning, very caring relationships and an extremely well thought-out curriculum, children make excellent progress. They do particularly well in personal and social development and communication, language and literacy. By the end of Reception virtually all children reach the nationally expected standards. The classroom areas

provide a vibrant and exciting area for learning so that children are totally absorbed in their activities. Opportunities for children to develop their creative, independent and social skills are many and varied, as a result, they grow in self-confidence and self-esteem. They play and cooperate very well together. The balance between activities children choose for themselves, and those led by an adult is excellent. The outside area is used extensively to extend and complement children's learning. The Foundation Stage curriculum is carefully extended into Year 1 so that there is a seamless transition when children leave the Reception Year. Children develop their early reading and writing skills very well because these aspects are taught extremely effectively. Children make great strides in their speaking and listening skills. This is due to the great emphasis that is placed on this area by all adults, who ensure there are excellent opportunities for children to question each other and to talk in pairs during each session. The Foundation Stage leader provides outstanding leadership and management. She constantly seeks ways to improve and focuses the staff on this particularly well. Planning is detailed and teaching assistants contribute significantly to its effectiveness. Assessment is very detailed and thorough. A very close check is kept on how children are doing and this contributes very well to a comprehensive picture of children's development and achievement.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards and improve achievement in writing.
- Develop the role of subject leaders in checking pupils' progress in their areas of responsibility.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils enter Year 1 with the skills and knowledge that are expected for their age. They build well on this strong start through Key Stages 1 and 2, making good progress overall. However, throughout the school pupils do better in reading than they do in writing. By the end of Year 6, overall standards in the national tests are above average. Standards in mathematics and science are stronger than English, where standards in writing are weaker than reading. In the current Year 6, school data and inspection evidence indicate that this pattern is repeated. The school has introduced a range of programmes to improve pupils' writing skills. These are just beginning to take effect. Revised approaches to teaching writing and additional opportunities for pupils to write more frequently in other subjects are accelerating progress. However, the full impact of this improvement is not yet visible in national assessment and test results.

Pupils who find learning more difficult make good progress and achieve well. This is due to the very good support they receive in lessons from teaching assistants.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupil's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. Relationships between pupils and adults are exemplary. Pupils are very polite and friendly and readily offer to help visitors without prompting. Pupils thoroughly enjoy learning and there is a high take-up for activities outside lessons. Themed events such as 'A Walk Under One Sky' help to develop their very good awareness of other cultures and life in a multi-ethnic society. Pupils raise substantial sums of money for those less fortunate than themselves, often suggesting ideas and organising the fund-raising events themselves. Pupils take on responsibilities willingly and carry them out sensibly. They make a very good contribution to the school community through the school council and Eco committee. They are very confident that their views are taken into account

and feel they make a difference to school life. Play leaders and guardian angels ensure that the most vulnerable pupils are well looked after at break and lunchtimes. Above average standards overall in the basic skills of literacy, numeracy, and information and communication technology (ICT) give pupils a good start to their secondary education.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Strong and harmonious relationships are a consistent strength of lessons. High expectations of what pupils can achieve lead to good levels of engagement in most activities. There is frequent use of paired work to develop pupils' skills in speaking and listening. When practice is outstanding, the pace of lessons is lively, questioning is particularly effective and makes pupils think more deeply about their learning and tasks are very challenging but tightly matched to pupils' abilities and so learning is rapid. On a few occasions, there is too much teacher talk and learning is too directed. Consequently, progress is slowed. Teaching assistants are adept at showing pupils who find learning more difficult how to take small steps in their learning. As a result, they are fully involved in lessons and make good progress. Pupils use the vibrant displays in all areas effectively as a resource to aid their learning; they are also proud of their work which features prominently on the walls.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is imaginative and carefully organised. Role play, music and creativity are strengths and have a positive impact on pupils' speaking and listening skills and promote their self-confidence well. A more focused approach to developing pupils' skills and knowledge through subjects linked in themes is now central to the schools planning. This is helping pupils to make greater sense of their learning. However, this new approach is still in the early stages of development. ICT is firmly planned for throughout the curriculum and supports pupils' learning well. There are growing opportunities for pupils to develop their writing skills in different subjects but these are mostly recent and their full impact on raising standards is yet to be seen. The impact of the outstanding emphasis on personal, social, emotional and health education is seen in the way pupils develop into confident, mature and polite individuals.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Levels of care are outstanding. 'My child has developed into a confident, caring and focused child because of the school's caring ethos,' is just one of the many very positive views expressed by parents. Teachers know pupils very well and the quality of relationships is very strong. Arrangements to safeguard pupils fully meet requirements. Health, safety and welfare arrangements are very good. The nurture room promotes self-confidence amongst pupils who find it hard to settle into school routines and aids others to develop self-discipline if they find difficulty controlling their behaviour. They are able to join in all school activities as a result. Academic guidance is very effective. Teachers and teaching assistants are fully aware of pupils' needs and provide sensitive guidance to help them improve. Ways of involving pupils in assessing their own understanding and progress are very good. Pupils are clear about the learning targets they have to reach and confirm they help them improve their work.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher and deputy headteacher share a clear vision for the school's future. Together with other members of the senior leadership team they have an accurate picture of current performance and of the changes that need to be made to secure future improvement. Very challenging targets are set and are helping to raise standards. As a result of thorough self-evaluation, leaders are confident in making the necessary adjustments to school practice in order to raise standards. For example, the rigorous system for checking on pupils' progress has recently been refined. This enables school leaders to quickly tackle any underachievement. These measures are leading to better progress, particularly in writing. Members of the senior leadership team regularly check on and have a good understanding of how to improve the quality of teaching and learning. However, many subject leaders are currently new to their roles as a result of staff changes and promotion. They are not yet fully involved in sharing the workload of checking on pupils' progress in their subjects, so have a more limited role in driving forward improvements. The school has identified this as an area for rapid improvement. It has good systems in place for staff training and development to underpin this process. Governors work closely with the school. They provide effective support and are not afraid to ask challenging questions. They help set the strategic direction well and ensure the school gives good value for money. The school's many and varied partnerships with local schools, the church, and external agencies help to raise the quality of pupils' education and ensure those in need of extra help are well supported.

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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
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?	1
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

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?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	1
The behaviour of learners	1
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1
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?	1

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

I would like to thank you on behalf of the inspection team for being so friendly and helpful when we inspected your school. We thoroughly enjoyed talking to you and finding out about all the interesting things you do.

Your school is a good school and some of the things about it are outstanding, for example, the way the adults care for you all. This helps you to feel safe and happy at school. We were impressed with how much you know about how to keep safe and healthy. Your behaviour is excellent. We were pleased that you are confident that adults will help you if you are sad or unhappy. It is very clear that you enjoy school and all the activities you take part in. We enjoyed watching older pupils take part in role-play activities when dressed as ancient Greeks. Your singing in assembly and lessons was beautiful. The children in the Reception and Nursery classes get a fantastic start to school life because they have so many super activities to take part in. We really enjoyed watching them looking at lots of different mini beasts and also pretending to be the Gingerbread Man.

By the end of Year 6 the standards you reach in mathematics and science are above average. They are not as high in English. Although you do well with your reading, you have not had enough opportunities in the past to practice your writing in different ways in all your lessons. We have asked your school to help you reach higher standards in writing. Teaching is good and you told us that your teachers make lessons fun and help you to learn. Don't forget to keep trying your best, working hard and remembering your learning targets.

Your headteacher and deputy headteacher work closely with governors to help plan what needs to be improved. Many of the teachers who take responsibility for the different subjects are quite new to these roles. We have asked your school to help them carry these roles out more effectively, particularly in checking how well you are doing in the different subjects.