

Rowena Nursery and Infant School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	106695
Local Authority	Doncaster
Inspection number	309201
Inspection dates	12–13 May 2008
Reporting inspector	Fiona Gowers

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	3–7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	243
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Chris Mills
Headteacher	Mrs Michelle Benton
Date of previous school inspection	11 October 2004
School address	Gardens Lane Conisbrough Doncaster South Yorkshire DN12 3JY
Telephone number	01709 863109
Fax number	01709 770500

Age group	3–7
Inspection dates	12–13 May 2008
Inspection number	309201

© Crown copyright 2008

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 larger than average sized infant school serves an area with significant levels of social and economic disadvantage. Most children are White British. A few are from minority ethnic backgrounds and a small number are at an early stage of learning to speak English. The proportion of children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is broadly average. The proportion of children eligible to receive a free school meal is well above average. The school has received the Charter Mark for Inclusion, the Active Mark, the Healthy Schools Award, the Eco Schools Bronze and Silver Awards, the Doncaster Physical Education and Schools Achievement Award and a Clean Air Award.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

Rowena is an outstanding school, which has continued to improve since its last inspection. The school's successes stem from outstanding leadership and management. The headteacher and deputy headteacher are utterly committed to the success of the school and set very high standards in the continual drive towards improvement. There is a strong emphasis on high quality team work, which creates a strong sense of belonging. This is a community where people genuinely care for each other and everyone's contribution is valued. All staff, including the site manager, office workers and dinner-time staff, play a significant part in helping children succeed. Everyone contributes to creating an extremely positive environment where children feel happy, secure and keen to learn. Children grow in confidence and self-belief as all at school are encouraged in the belief, expressed in the school's mission statement, that, 'Hand in Hand together we can!' Parents are overwhelmingly supportive of the school, typically commenting: 'Rowena is an excellent school. The headteacher and staff really care about the school and the children. They are always ready to go the extra mile.'

Children get off to a flying start in their learning in the excellent Foundation Stage. They enjoy an exciting range of learning activities and develop very positive attitudes to learning. Children continue to make rapid progress throughout Key Stage 1 and reach above average standards, as a result of outstanding teaching. High expectations, careful planning and a consistent approach to creating interesting, stimulating activities result in children who not only develop a love of learning but also achieve exceptionally well. Many parents agree that their children love coming to school, because, 'the school makes learning fun'.

The school provides an excellent curriculum. A wide variety of practical activities, visits and visitors add enjoyment and interest to learning. There is a strong focus on supporting listening and speaking skills and increasing self-esteem. Opportunities for children to explore ideas through drama and role-play activities support the development of literacy skills particularly well. For example, older children found out about characters in a story by asking 'Cinderella' and her 'Ugly sister' a range of searching questions.

Care, guidance and support are outstanding. The school nurtures those with difficulties, but also provides strong academic and personal support for all. This enables children to feel very happy and secure and develop outstanding personal and social skills. Comments such as, 'We're all friends.' and 'Let's share and do it together.' can be heard in the classrooms. Children are immensely proud of their many roles of responsibility, such as membership of the school council or the green team, or work as a Rowena Ranger. They feel their views are taken seriously and are very pleased with changes they have brought about. They develop key life skills such as learning to work well as a team to solve problems, whilst taking on board the ideas and opinions of others. For example, the green team strongly encourage all at school to recycle and conserve energy, by writing letters to parents and putting up posters, as well as switching off lights and helping organise the many recycling initiatives. They improve the environment by planting bulbs and look forward to eating the fruit off their newly planted fruit trees, explaining: 'The fruit will be very healthy because they are organic and have a lot of freshness inside!'

The school successfully develops a strong partnership with parents and the local community. Parents and carers work alongside staff at weekly reading and mathematics mornings to help their children learn. The school also offers many activities and courses for parents and carers to develop their own skills. School leadership has an extremely good understanding of the

school's strengths and an exceptionally clear vision for improvement. Systems for monitoring the quality of teaching and learning are very effective and help maintain rapid rates of children's progress, as well as outstanding levels of personal development and well-being. In light of such strengths and successes the school clearly shows it has outstanding capacity to improve.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 1

The Foundation Stage leader is an excellent role model for other staff in school. She successfully leads a very hardworking and committed team. Children cannot wait to take part in the wide range of exciting learning activities around a particular theme, with a particular emphasis on promoting children's language skills. Children were fascinated as they observed their own caterpillars transforming into butterflies and thoroughly enjoyed going on a 'minibeast' hunt, recording their own findings. When they start the Nursery children's ability levels are well below those typically expected for their age. Many children have exceptionally low literacy and numeracy skills. With so many exciting learning activities it is hardly surprising that children thoroughly enjoy their time in the Foundation Stage and make very good progress, reaching expected goals. Parents very much appreciate the very strong care and support provided by all staff. This helps children to settle very well into school and develop very positive attitudes to learning. One parent expressed a typical view in the comment, 'My child has come on in leaps and bounds since starting school.'

What the school should do to improve further

- There are no significant areas for improvement.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

In Years 1 and 2 children make exceptional progress. This is a result of excellent teaching and a stimulating curriculum. By the end of Year 2, they attain above average standards, from their well below average starting points on entry to the Foundation Stage. A strong emphasis on improving speaking, listening and comprehension skills has led to particularly rapid progress in these areas, as well as reading, writing and science. The school sets very challenging targets to help raise attainment and is very successful in achieving them. A review of the mathematics curriculum and an increased emphasis on using and applying skills learnt is leading to accelerated progress in mathematics. The achievement of children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is excellent. This is because teachers and teaching assistants assess their needs very accurately and provide them with well designed, challenging tasks, with high quality support.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

The school puts very strong emphasis on children's personal development, because many start school with low personal and social skills and low self-confidence. Children flourish in the extremely nurturing environment, because, as many parents agree, 'At Rowena every child is made to feel special.' Excellent relationships throughout school help children grow in confidence and show high levels of care and concern for others. Lunch-times are very social occasions and children feel very happy and secure as the school ethos is upheld by all staff. Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. They have an excellent understanding of a healthy lifestyle, and the school council has worked hard to help children keep fit at

play-times on the Tyre Park and Trim Trail. Children are exceptionally well prepared for their future lives through their very well developed literacy, mathematical and information and communication technology (ICT) skills and many roles of responsibility. Although attendance rates remain broadly average, staff and governors do all they can to maintain a positive trend. A significant number of parents continue to take holidays during term time, which remains a cause for concern.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 1

Teachers have an excellent understanding of how children learn. They are well organised and have high expectations of what children can achieve. Lessons are lively, interesting and fun, with a strong practical element. Excellent relationships between all adults and children underpin this. As a result children feel secure, have positive attitudes to school life and behave exceptionally well. Regular checks and accurate measures of the progress children are making allow teachers to ensure that work they set builds consistently on what children already know. As a result they can clearly see the successful steps in their learning and know what they need to do to improve their work. A high quality team of teaching assistants make a very significant contribution to pupils' learning. They work closely with teachers to ensure all their children's needs are met.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The school's curriculum is of exceptional quality. This is regularly reviewed to ensure it continues to meet the needs of all learners and adds interest and enjoyment to learning. It is delivered in a creative and imaginative way and is enriched by a wealth of extra-curricular experiences. This results in confident, articulate children, who enjoy, and are excited by, their learning. Children talk enthusiastically about trips and visits, which bring their learning alive and enrich their language. A recent trip to Conisbrough Castle motivated children to explore their ideas about the different parts of a castle and life in the past. This was the focus of a range of artwork and children explain: 'It's better to see a real castle.' Classrooms are vibrant centres of learning, in which ICT is used extremely well to enhance children's experiences. An excellent personal, social and health education programme helps children to explore their feelings and relationships with others. It also shows children how to stay safe and informs them of the importance of a healthy diet.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

The school's outstanding provision in this area is firmly reflected in its inclusive and caring ethos. Child protection procedures are securely in place and arrangements for health and safety are robust. Pastoral care is outstanding, especially the monitoring and support given to the most vulnerable children. Children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, and those learning to speak English as an additional language, receive excellent individual support. Strong partnerships with the local community and very close working relationships with a wide range of agencies contributes to the very high standard of care. Systems to support academic progress are highly effective and lead to excellent rates of progress. Children enjoy working towards

targets for improvement. Parents are well informed about how well their children are doing and how they can help their children improve further.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

Leadership and management are outstanding. Central to the school's work is its self-evaluation. New initiatives are well thought out and often trialled and evaluated carefully by key staff before they are adopted throughout the school. This 'step by step' approach means new initiatives are highly successful, because staff are aware of the purpose behind them and fully involved in their development. Subject leaders are keen to try out new ideas to help children learn even more effectively and share what they have gained from their professional development. The governing body cares deeply about the school, its children and their families. It is knowledgeable and has the expertise to check how well the school is achieving its goals. The school greatly benefits from their professional expertise and community links. For example, the governing body provided expert advice which enabled the school to significantly improve the ICT provision. They work with school leadership to maintain extremely positive links with parents and the wider community. Governors and school leaders recently harnessed a large team of parents and volunteers from the community to develop a very attractive and stimulating outdoor learning environment for children in the Nursery. The school enjoys a positive reputation in the local community, excellent links with local authority services and other education providers and plays a leading role in its work with other schools.

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
---	----------------

Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	1
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	1

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	1
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	1
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	1

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	3
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	1

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	1
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1
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?	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1
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 Rowena Nursery and Infant School, Doncaster, DN12 3JY

We thoroughly enjoyed our visit to your school, because everyone was so welcoming and friendly.

You told us how much you enjoyed coming to school and we could see how happy you are at Rowena. Your behaviour is excellent and you try very hard to do what teachers ask of you. Adults look after you very well so you feel safe and confident about asking them for help or talking to them about any worries. The school is extremely good at giving special help to those of you who need it. You enjoy your healthy school dinners and keeping fit on the Trim Trail and Tyre Park.

Rowena is an outstanding school. Your headteacher, governors and all the staff are an excellent team and work tirelessly for your benefit. Your school provides you with an excellent education that we know you enjoy. You make excellent progress with your work and you reach high standards when you leave at the end of Year 2. This is because you receive excellent teaching and enjoy many exciting learning activities.

Your headteacher and other adults in school know exactly what needs to be done to make sure Rowena continues to be an outstanding school. You can help by continuing to come to school regularly and trying your best, remembering 'Hand in Hand, together we can.'

We wish you and your teachers well in the future.