

Rayleigh Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	115063
Local Authority	Essex
Inspection number	311808
Inspection date	17 June 2008
Reporting inspector	Roger Brown

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	467
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Ken Merchant
Headteacher	Mr Peter Malcolm
Date of previous school inspection	3 May 2005
School address	Love Lane Rayleigh Essex SS6 7DD
Telephone number	01268775712
Fax number	01268770190

Age group	4-11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

The inspector evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following aspects: the impact of curricular developments with particular reference to improving standards and the work of the leadership and management in maintaining and enhancing, where appropriate, the quality of learning at the school.

Evidence was gathered from brief lesson observations and a scrutiny of children's work and school documentation. Parents' questionnaires and discussions with pupils, a governor and staff also contributed to the judgements. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail but the inspector found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given in its self-evaluation form, were not justified and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

Description of the school

This is a large school drawing pupils from the town of Rayleigh. Most of the children are of White British descent. There are small numbers of children from other backgrounds. A few of these do not have English as their home language, though all are fluent in English. The proportion of children eligible for free school meals is below average, as is the number of children who require extra help with their learning. The nature of the catchment is changing but the majority of children start at the school attaining standards that are just above those expected.

The school has Healthy Schools status, Activemark, a Silver ECO School award and an Intermediate Level of International School award.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

'It is a wonderful school where my child has flourished and developed in a supportive and caring environment.' This parent's viewpoint was typical of those received for the inspection. At the last inspection, three years ago, the school was judged outstanding in almost all respects. It has maintained all the elements that were then judged outstanding and through a process of innovation, combined with system of rigorous monitoring and development, has improved those areas that were 'only' considered to be good. It therefore continues to be an outstanding school.

This is an exciting school. Pupils and staff thrive as learners. It is not perfect but the consistency with which it maintains levels of best practice demonstrates that it is a beacon of excellence. Standards at all stages and in all subjects are always well above average and at times they are exceptionally high. This high level of performance has been sustained for more than six years. Pupils' achievements are outstanding. They make incremental progress year-on-year, not just in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science, but across other subjects as well. This is the result of thoughtful decisions, such as the extended morning, specialist instruction for dance and drama, music, physical education, information and communication technology (ICT), as well as short daily sessions of French for every child from Foundation Stage to Year 6.

The school has developed the curriculum into a powerful and exciting tool for learning. As such, it is an outstanding example of good practice. The teachers work within a very tightly organised framework but are given a great deal of encouragement to innovate and develop their ideas and practice. Each planned module of learning contains common elements. It may start, or end, with a memorable event, such as Year 6's Shakespearian production. Each module incorporates thinking skills, a philosophy element and a focus on the different factors that help each child to learn most effectively. Where it is relevant, a global dimension is incorporated. The school already has links with seven other schools from around the world and more are planned. A visit from the children who attend their French partner school, successfully focused on a joint topic about healthy eating. The modules have time built in for pupils to carry out their own investigations. Often this involves the creative use of ICT with an emphasis on the use of film and the development of pupils' writing. The school has created a special website, now shared with other schools, where pupils are encouraged to post their own high quality stories. They also read and constructively criticise those that other children have put forward. This forms strong links with the local secondary schools. Older pupils are encouraged to become even more active in their learning, eventually designing their own tasks and learning modules.

In the surveys of pupils' opinions they say that they want innovations that are even more exciting. However, teachers are rightly wary of introducing ideas just because they are new or engaging. They recognise that it is not enough to excite and stimulate the pupils' interest in what they are doing. They understand that they need to be able to prove that what they are doing actually enhances the pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding. The leadership recognises that this is an important priority to maintain the school's credibility and high reputation.

Leadership and management were considered to be outstanding at the last inspection. They still are. Nevertheless, the whole structure has been reorganised in the past two years to take into account the changes in personnel and the evolving curricular programme. Roles and responsibilities are clearly defined and well understood with transparent lines of accountability

for everyone. The phase leaders have a degree of autonomy and access to resources that both fosters teamwork and enables them to support innovation. The integration of the subject leaders' roles and responsibilities with that of the phase leaders strengthens the whole system.

The systems and procedures that have been put in place give the leadership of the school a very clear picture of what works well and what needs to be improved. All staff and governors are involved in evaluating the work of the school and as such are their own harshest critics. They judge teaching at the school to be good. This is because the majority of the regular lesson observations are judged to fall into this category. However, over the long term, the impact of the teaching is outstanding, as standards are consistently above those expected and the pupils' achievements consistently outstanding.

The pupils' personal development and well-being, along with the care guidance and support they receive, are all outstanding. High quality relationships between all staff and the pupils ensure this level of excellence. Pupils are safe, happy and have an excellent understanding of how to keep themselves healthy. They work well together and make an excellent contribution to the life of the school and its community. All are developing skills that give them an excellent preparation for their next stage of education. Given the excellent quality of the provision, and the ambition, drive and commitment that is apparent at all levels in the school, there is an outstanding capacity to continue to improve further.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 1

The Foundation Stage is outstanding. When children move into Year 1, most have reached and many exceed the levels typical for their age. Excellent arrangements are in place to support the transition into Year 1. These are particularly focused on those children who need more help with their learning. Throughout the Foundation Stage, children work and play happily together in attractive and imaginatively resourced indoor and outdoor classroom spaces. Teaching and learning are outstanding. Excellent teamwork ensures all children make outstanding progress. There is an effective balance between children choosing their own learning activities and adult directed work when this is more appropriate, for instance, when the children were carefully handling and observing a range of mini-beasts. Leadership and management of the Foundation Stage are excellent. Highly effective assessment procedures enable staff to monitor the children's progress and help to guide them in planning activities for the next steps in their learning. Staff are in the process of implementing an action plan to make this aspect even more efficient and effective by using hand held computers to record and collate the information.

What the school should do to improve further

- Establish relevant measures to monitor the innovative practices being developed at the school to ensure each one has a positive impact on pupils' learning.

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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?	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	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	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

18 June 2008

Dear Children,

Inspection of Rayleigh Primary School, Rayleigh SS6 7DD

Thank you for being so friendly when I visited your school. I would like to share with you what I found when I spent time in your lessons and talked with you and your teachers.

What an enjoyable day I had in your school. I was very impressed with how polite and thoughtful you are. I was also glad to see how well you get on together and delighted to hear how you enjoy coming to school. I would have loved to have spent more time with you and seen even more of the exciting things you wanted me to see. As it was, I only had the briefest opportunity to see some of the films you have made, look at your online writing (which is excellent), and have a quick glance at the video of your performances.

I think your school is outstanding. Practically all of your parents agree with me about this. They had almost as much to tell me about it as you did. When I watched your lessons and looked at your work, I could see that your teachers and teaching assistants work really hard to help you to learn, and they have some really great ideas to help you. Even better, they encourage you to use your own ideas, and it is clear you have so many of your own, well done! However, with so many new and exciting things happening in your school, I have asked your teachers to work out how they can measure whether the changes they are introducing actually improve your learning. I know that you have told them you want work that is even more exciting. Nevertheless, I want them to make sure that in doing so, they do not let the consistently high standards you now achieve fall or slip in any way.

Thank you once again for your warm welcome.

All the best for the future.

Yours sincerely

Roger Brown

Lead inspector