

# Rickling Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	115130
<b>Local Authority</b>	Essex
<b>Inspection number</b>	311848
<b>Inspection dates</b>	14–15 October 2008
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Roger Brown

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

The registered childcare, managed by the governing body, was inspected under section 49 of the Childcare Act 2006.

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<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary controlled
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School (total)	92
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	0
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	15
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mrs Rosemary Cowper
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs Helen O' Brien
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	23 November 2004
<b>Date of previous funded early education inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
<b>Date of previous childcare inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
<b>School address</b>	Rickling Green Saffron Walden Essex CB11 3YG
<b>Telephone number</b>	01799 543274
<b>Fax number</b>	01799 540988

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<b>Age group</b>	4–11
<b>Inspection dates</b>	14–15 October 2008
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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

## Description of the school

The school is smaller than average in size, but numbers are rising. An increasing proportion of pupils move to and from the school during each academic year. Most pupils are from White British backgrounds. The small numbers who are from other cultures do not speak English as their mother tongue. A smaller than average proportion are entitled to free school meals. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below average, but a higher than average number have a statement of special educational needs. In 2007, the school federated with another small church school in the area, and the headteacher and new deputy headteacher now have responsibility for both schools. The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) takes in children at the beginning of the academic year in which they reach their fifth birthday. Attainment on entry varies widely, but data over three years indicates that, on average, it is in line with the expected levels.

The school has a Healthy Schools award.

## 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 elements of its work, such as the pupils' personal development and the care and guidance they receive are outstanding. Pupils achieve well and leave school as well rounded individuals, both academically and socially. They are well equipped to face the next challenges in their educational lives. The school enjoys very good support from parents and is justifiably proud of its good reputation in the local community. A comment made by one parent and echoed by others, sums up parents' views, 'My experience has been of a very caring and supportive environment.'

Under the good leadership of the headteacher, the school has made effective progress since the last inspection. The weaknesses that were identified have been tackled and there have been clear improvements. The school has moved on in other ways. In 2007, the headteacher was invited to take on the leadership of another small primary school to form a federation of the two. At the time, this raised concerns among both staff and parents, but the evidence indicates that the school has benefitted from this move. The new deputy headteacher in post is making an important contribution to the development of teaching and assessment and the leadership of the school is good. Standards are rising as a result of good teaching. Staff now take on wider responsibilities and share in a dialogue about their work; they too are increasing their knowledge and understanding on a range of matters that are benefitting all aspects of this school. This winning combination of factors illustrates the school's good capacity for continued improvement.

All pupils make good progress and, by the time they leave school, standards are above the national average. Standards across the school are now on an upward trend. Much of this is due to strengths in leadership, the staff's strong contribution to pupils' personal, social and intellectual development, as well as the qualities the pupils bring to the life of the school.

Teaching is often lively and fun for everyone, whatever their abilities. Relationships in the school are a strength and there is a genuine respect between adults and pupils that helps to create a learning environment where pupils flourish. Teaching assistants bring a host of skills which enhance pupils' learning, but in some lessons they are underused and the pupils miss out, in part, on the support and challenge they can bring. The curriculum is developing well. Year 6 pupils who have seen it evolve and change say that it promotes a real sense of enjoyment and achievement for them. This is helped in no small measure by the wide array of enrichment activities. Information and communication technology (ICT) is now providing good support for cross-curricular working. Staff and pupils recognise that this development is effective at promoting learning, but there is some way to go before the curriculum is refined to the point where it will match individual learner's needs.

This is a school that recognises and celebrates the individuality of pupils. It arises from the high levels of pastoral care for pupils. Pupils have a genuine voice in the life of the school which builds up their confidence and self-esteem. Pupils are given plenty of guidance to help improve their work and readily take on the comments and advice given. Pupils behave very well and have an infectious enthusiasm and enjoyment for school. They show a mature awareness of right and wrong and respect the traditions and beliefs of others. Pupils know and, importantly, practice, what is needed to follow fit and healthy lives and manage risk in their lives well. Their sense of social responsibility is clear and they make important and much appreciated contributions to both the school and local community.

## **Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage**

### **Grade: 2**

The good quality of the leadership and teaching in the EYFS gives children an effective start to the early years of their schooling. The welcoming family atmosphere ensures that children settle well. Older pupils do a good job of supporting the children. They act as play leaders at break times and generally take every opportunity to help them in and around school. This means the children are very happy to come to school, talk confidently about their work and are enthusiastic about learning. There is a good focus on literacy and numeracy and the children are very eager to take part in activities. They enjoy acting out stories, and are beginning to recognise words, as well as eagerly sounding out letters to identify new words. There is a good range of experiences provided, both indoors and in the outside environment. In both areas, children enjoy learning opportunities that arise from the activities that are provided, as well as those based on their own interests. All staff ensure that children, including those who need extra support, make good progress. They are included within all activities and are well looked after. Good use of assessment outcomes ensures that, by the end of the EYFS, most are attaining at a level beyond that expected.

### **What the school should do to improve further**

- Ensure that best use is made of teaching assistants time and skills to promote pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding.
- Develop and personalise the curriculum to match it more closely to the needs and interests of individuals.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 2**

Most pupils are attaining standards above those expected for their age by the end of each key stage. An above average number of pupils often achieve the higher than expected levels at both Key Stages 1 and 2. However, the picture is not a consistent one. The small numbers of pupils in each year group, coupled with an unusually wide range of attainment, means that there is no clear overall pattern in the level of achievement. Some year groups attain exceptionally high standards in all subjects, whilst for others, the average standards are closer to those expected. Standards in writing have not been as good as those in reading, but the teachers' concentration upon improving writing now appears to be paying off, with recent improvements in this area. A small number of parents are concerned that their children are not being sufficiently challenged in mathematics, but this is not a school wide issue. A well managed and carefully monitored assessment system shows that the majority of pupils are making better than expected progress in most subjects. Pupils who require extra support with their learning do well in comparison to their starting points. They are identified early, receive good quality support and are monitored carefully. There is little variation in the progress and achievement of boys and girls or those few children who have English as an additional language.

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 1**

Pupils throughout the school behave extremely well and their level of attendance is good. Their attitude to school is excellent, helped by their good learning habits such as listening attentively and working co-operatively. Pupils show high levels of respect for adults and one another.

They are very careful in regard to each other's safety. Pupils expressed no concerns about bullying and are adamant that there is always someone to talk to if they have any concerns. Pupils' good progress owes much to the considerable enjoyment they take from their work and activities, although opportunities for them to take more initiative for their own learning are not yet plentiful enough. Teaching and the curriculum builds pupils' confidence and their excellent spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. They are reflective, caring individuals with a strong awareness of different faiths and cultures. Good quality healthy school meals form a great start for pupils to adopt a healthy lifestyle; a point made very emphatically by Year 6 pupils. This means they carefully consider their diet and staying physically fit. Pupils contribute positively to the life of the school, for example offering ideas on improving the playground and the school allotment. Pupils are also active in raising money for many good causes at home and abroad. They leave the school well prepared for the future.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 2**

The fact that all pupils make good progress and achieve well owes much to the quality of teaching and learning. Many lessons are lively and fun. They are based on good quality planning that ensures that the tasks that are set are well matched to the wide ability levels of pupils. Relationships across the school are excellent and there is a real sense of enjoyment evident in many lessons. Writing skills are now being taught very well and, as a result, this area is improving. Teaching assistants make a significant contribution to supporting and enhancing the achievement of those pupils who find learning difficult. However, at times, in some lessons, they are underused and pupils in general miss out in their learning because of this. There are high quality examples of the marking of pupils' work. This is helping to improve the pupils' development, as the teachers make it explicitly clear what is needed to be done to move on to the next level.

### **Curriculum and other activities**

#### **Grade: 2**

The curriculum is accurately focused on developing pupils' knowledge and skills in literacy, numeracy and science, and builds well on their prior knowledge. Teachers are increasingly exploring links between subjects to meet the needs of learners better and to make lessons more interesting. Enrichment of the curriculum is good. The range of visitors and visits brings lessons to life for pupils. The wide range of after school clubs, with strong emphasis on sport, is a good feature of the school. Pupils' emotional well-being is well provided for through the strong emphasis on personal, social and health education. The curriculum benefits from the positive use of ICT. Although there is a growing element of cross-curricular working, there is still some way to go before this is accurately targeted at the individual needs of the pupils.

### **Care, guidance and support**

#### **Grade: 1**

The school's inclusive and supportive ethos is successfully driven by the headteacher, and pupils readily acknowledge her influence on the quality of pastoral support, and the development of citizenship, which is excellent. Pupils feel safe in school and are confident that they have someone to turn to. There are now very effective systems for checking pupils' progress, and the information gathered is being used by teachers to inform their planning. The classroom

teachers still lack a degree of confidence in using and managing the data for themselves, but are getting good training and support for this. Pupils find target setting very helpful in improving their learning, and the pupils know and use their targets well in support of their own development. A really effective marking system is emerging and this is just as powerful as the target setting in helping pupils to move forward with their learning. Rigorous systems are in place for safeguarding pupils, ensuring that all statutory requirements are met.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 2**

The headteacher and deputy share a significant responsibility in the running of the federation. Together they have successfully tackled the challenges of running two distinctive schools, and Rickling Primary has benefitted from this process. They are well supported by the governors who carry out their role well and are increasingly able to hold the leadership to account. The views of all stakeholders are valued and this is particularly evident in the way pupils demonstrate their ownership of the school. The excellent development of a range of partnerships with other schools, local organisations and others, in a range of settings, is one of the school's strengths. It would be easy for the staff in this pleasant village setting to allow their pupils to ignore the problems and issues in the wider world, but they do not. Older pupils are positively encouraged to debate current issues, and do so thoughtfully. All pupils are regularly made aware of matters in the wider world through a wide range of excellent enrichment activities.

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**Annex A**

## Inspection judgements

<b>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</b>	<b>School Overall</b>
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### Overall effectiveness

<b>How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?</b>	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 capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

### Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

<b>How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?</b>	2
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	2
How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	1
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	2
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	1
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	2

### Achievement and standards

<b>How well do learners achieve?</b>	2
The standards <sup>1</sup> 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/or disabilities make progress	2

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<sup>1</sup>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.

## Personal development and well-being

<b>How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	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
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	2
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

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?</b>	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

## Leadership and management

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	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 eliminated	1
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	1
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

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**Annex B**

## **Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

16 October 2008

Dear Children

Inspection of Rickling Church of England VC Primary School, Saffron Walden, CB11 3YG

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

I really enjoyed my time in your school. I was very impressed with how polite, thoughtful and caring you all are. I think that your attitudes to school, to each other, and your care for others and the environment are excellent. I was especially impressed by those of you from Year 6 with your wide ranging knowledge of current issues. I think that your teacher's use of the newspapers and the way you research topics is a great idea. Well done!

You go to a good school. It is clearly working well and many of your parents wrote to me to tell me this. A number of things really pleased me. One was the way in which the standard of your work is improving. Another is the way in which you are now using ICT. Year 6 made it plain that you would like even more equipment to use as you have many good ideas as to how this could help everyone's learning. I think you are right, and I have asked your teachers to examine ways in which they can make the things you study even more relevant and interesting for each one of you.

I could see that your teachers and teaching assistants work really hard to help you to learn and that they have some great ideas to help you. However, I would still like them to do more to work together to plan how they will support you all throughout the lessons.

One last point, I think that the play leaders make an excellent contribution to the school. Some of the parents of the youngest children wrote to me to tell me this too. Well done once again.

Thank you once again for your warm welcome, and all the best for the future.

Yours sincerely

Roger Brown

Lead inspector