

Rowanfield Junior School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	115591
Local Authority	Gloucestershire
Inspection number	311993
Inspection dates	24–25 January 2008
Reporting inspector	John English

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

Type of school	Junior
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	7–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	274
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Vacant Position
Headteacher	Claire Morrison
Date of previous school inspection	1 July 2002
School address	Alstone Lane Cheltenham GL51 8HY
Telephone number	01242 516611
Fax number	01242 255039

Age group	7–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This is a larger than average sized school situated on the northern outskirts of Cheltenham. Most of the pupils are from White British backgrounds. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is above average. There is a very high proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

Rowanfield Juniors is an outstanding school, where all the pupils develop as mature, engaging young people with a strong sense of social responsibility. At the heart of everything the school does is its vision – the 4D's – Dream, Drive, Duty, Dazzle. This provides a framework for the daily work of the school, and for the personal development and achievement of the pupils. They understand what it means, and as a result they develop their aspirations (dream), determination to succeed (drive), their sense of responsibility (duty), and their sense of what is special and out of the ordinary, what dazzles. Indeed, inspectors themselves were dazzled by much of the work of the school. So are many parents. One parent represented many in writing: 'All my children have made fantastic progress whilst at the school. The teachers are really passionate and their enthusiasm inspires my children to excel themselves.'

The pupils' personal development is outstanding. The pupils are lively, kind and thoughtful and the vast majority love coming to school because lessons are fun, and they enjoy the company of their teachers and friends. However, a very small number attend poorly and, as a result, overall attendance is average. Pupils' behaviour around the school and in lessons is exemplary. They participate in activities with discipline and enthusiasm. An outstanding feature is the way they help others through a variety of responsibilities, in the playground and in lessons. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. Preparation for the future is exceptional – pupils take part in practice interviews, receive talks from local employers, and run a mini-company.

All the pupils achieve well, and achievement across the school is improving year-on-year. The school has a very wide range of pupils with different skills and abilities, including those who are gifted and talented, and many pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Pupils make good progress from relatively low starting points and so standards are broadly in line with the average by the time pupils leave school. Teaching and learning are good. The most able pupils receive appropriately challenging work, and pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are well supported so that all achieve equally well. The curriculum is outstanding. It combines a strong emphasis on developing the key skills of literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT) with planning other subjects in a creative way that motivates and interests the pupils.

A very strong leadership team provides a clear vision for the school and a sense of direction for the staff. Leaders keep a very close eye on the progress made by all pupils through an exceptionally thorough tracking system. Senior managers have a very good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school and governors support them well. Procedures for monitoring the school's work and planning for improvement are excellent. The pupils are exceptionally well cared for by all the adults at the school as well as the external agencies, such as social services and school psychologists. All safeguarding procedures are securely in place.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the attendance of the small number of pupils who regularly miss school.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Standards on entry to the school vary from year to year but they are generally below average in English and well below average in mathematics. Many pupils enter the school with poor social and communication skills, which inhibits their rate of progress. Despite this, by the end of Year 6 they attain broadly average standards in English and mathematics and do particularly well in science. This indicates a good rate of progress. High quality teaching, outstanding care and guidance and motivating activities enable pupils to achieve well. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities achieve as well as their peers because of the support and guidance that they receive from teacher assistants and the diligence with which the school constantly assesses their progress and provides additional support where needed. The most capable pupils are challenged consistently to stretch themselves. The way that they rise to teachers' levels of expectation contributes greatly to the progress that they make and the standards they attain.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

The pupils are a delight. They are confident, caring and willingly engage in conversation. Pupils respond with cheerful enthusiasm to opportunities given to them, getting fully involved in their own learning. They help put things right when they have done something wrong, and they relish the chance to work collaboratively. Pupils' development of an excellent awareness of what constitutes a safe and healthy lifestyle is seen in their sensible food choices and enthusiasm for sporting activities. As a parent said, 'It's a great school that promotes healthy living and respect for each other.' Pupils are very thoughtful young people. They reflect on the sacrifices made in war, consider other cultures and religions and contribute extremely well to the school community. Responsibilities such as house captain, harvesting the school garden or being a playground friend are taken seriously. Money is raised for a wide range of charities and a child in Uganda supported. They support each other very well in lessons too, such as providing helpful and mature assessments of each others' work.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teachers enthuse boys and girls of all abilities by planning stimulating lessons that ensure their good progress. Skilled learning support assistants aid pupils' learning very well. Most lessons are good and a few lessons are outstanding because of their particularly high levels of challenge and pace. Generally, pupils are taught well because teachers provide a good variety of activities and have high expectations of pupils' learning. Pupils respond very positively to teachers' good humour and very positive approach. They appreciate the orderly classrooms and varied activities that give them opportunities for choice and independence. Teachers know their subjects extremely well and they use questions very effectively to develop pupils' speaking and listening skills. Teachers are very good at monitoring pupils' progress. They use praise well and set challenging targets that motivate pupils to succeed.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The curriculum is very well tailored to meet the needs of the pupils it serves, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The imaginative and inspiring way in which many subjects link together strongly motivates pupils to acquire knowledge and skills at a good rate. For example, a project on animals and their environments developed pupils' ICT, craft and communication skills as well their scientific understanding. A further outstanding feature is the range and imaginative variety of special events, such as a Year 5 'Ancient Olympic Games' project, which enabled pupils to make productive links between their learning in history and physical education. There are many out-of-school clubs, including sporting, cultural and subject-based activities such as computing. The school goes out of its way to ensure that as many pupils as possible can participate by removing financial barriers and ensuring fair access to clubs that are over-subscribed.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

The whole school community works well together to ensure that pupils flourish academically and personally because they feel safe and valued. Every pupil knows that any concerns are taken seriously. Support for pupils' personal and emotional development is excellent, particularly when they first enter the school, and this prepares them to take full advantage of the opportunities that are offered to them. Through role-play, discussion and the input of agencies such as the emergency services, pupils learn how to express strong emotions safely and how to look after themselves very well.

Parents are rightly pleased with arrangements for pupils joining the school and moving on to secondary education because staff ease anxiety and promote a sense of eager anticipation. The school's excellent procedures for tracking the progress of pupils enable it to quickly identify and support those at risk of underachievement. Pupils are fully aware of their targets and of what they need to do to improve the quality of their work.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

Leaders' vision, the 4 D's, permeates the work of the school. It is the driving force behind the school's improving standards and pupils' rising levels of achievement. All the pupils are valued, from those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities to the gifted and talented. The school has an excellent commitment to promoting the inclusion of vulnerable pupils as leaders ensure that additional support is provided to those pupils who need it. The school sets clear targets and achieves most of them, analysing very carefully where there are weaknesses in performance and then planning thoroughly to eliminate them. As a result, senior leaders and well-organised governors are keenly aware of the strengths and weaknesses of the school, although their efforts to improve the attendance of a small minority of pupils is having limited success. The school has an excellent capacity for further improvement because all managers understand their roles and carry out their responsibilities vigorously and with clarity of purpose.

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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 capacity to make any necessary improvements	1

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
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	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?	2
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	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

25 January 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Rowanfield Junior School, Cheltenham, GL51 8HY

Thank you for your welcome when we visited your school recently. We very much enjoyed talking to you and watching you at work. To use the language of your 4D's, we were dazzled by much of what we saw. We thought many of you had exciting and interesting dreams, and the drive to achieve them, and it is now my duty to report the findings to you.

- Yours is an outstanding school.
- Those who run the school do a very good job and all the adults work really well together.
- You are making good progress in your work because lessons are good and you have an excellent attitude to learning.
- You develop really well as young people and you know a great deal about staying safe and being healthy.
- The school prepares you very well for moving into your secondary school.
- When you need help and support there is always an adult who can provide them for you. All adults look after you very well
- Your curriculum is exciting and varied and there are very good opportunities for visits, clubs and other interesting activities.

You are rightly proud of your school and enjoy being there. Most of you go as often as you can. However, a few of you do not attend regularly and so we have asked the school to work with you and your parents to improve this.

Best wishes and good luck to all of you in the future,

John English Lead inspector