

# Rowlands Castle St John's Church of England Controlled Primary School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	116310
<b>Local Authority</b>	Hampshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	312252
<b>Inspection dates</b>	20–21 November 2007
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	John Laver

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

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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	182
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mrs Sue DeGuisa
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs Kay Pennicotte-Henrie
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	1 November 2006
<b>School address</b>	Whichers Gate Road Rowland's Castle PO9 6BB
<b>Telephone number</b>	02392 412095
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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

## Description of the school

The school is of average size and serves an area with mixed socio-economic characteristics. The number of pupils entitled to free school meals is well below average for a school of this size. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities is above average, but the proportion with a statement of special needs is below average. A significant number of pupils join or leave the school other than in Years 1 and 6. The school has a new leadership team. At the time of the previous inspection, the school was given a notice to improve because of inadequate achievement.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 3

In accordance with Section 13 (5) of the Education Act 2005, HMCI is of the opinion that the school no longer requires significant improvement. The head teacher has revamped the leadership team and introduced several teaching and learning initiatives that have improved achievement, which is now satisfactory.

The school now provides a satisfactory standard of education and is improving after a period of staffing instability and a decline in standards. The relatively new head teacher has worked hard to ensure that the school has turned the corner. Pupils' progress is now satisfactory and standards are improving. The basis for improvement has been a determined leadership, building on the school's accurate evaluations of its strengths and weaknesses. As a result, the head teacher, governors and staff are secure in their understanding of how to build on the improvements already evident.

Achievement is now satisfactory. The 2007 national test results showed that pupils' performance in English, mathematics and science had improved compared with the previous year.

Disappointing test results in the past partly reflect weaknesses in teaching. Teaching has now improved, although there is still some inconsistency in behaviour management and use of assessment. Test results vary from year to year because of the effect of fluctuations in pupil numbers and the unpredictability caused by the high mobility of pupils. This has hampered the efforts of the school to develop consistency in the rate of progress made by pupils across all classes. The leadership's initiatives to promote better learning have led to improvements in pupils' progress. A few pupils of higher ability are not always challenged enough in lessons and could achieve better. Standards in mathematics are higher, but still below average. Sometimes teaching lacks the pace and challenge to enthuse pupils, and teachers mark work inconsistently.

The leadership's more focused monitoring and strong team work has improved learning, and has ensured that pupils understand their targets better. The school is currently on track to meet next year's targets. However, the school knows that there is still work to be done to bring about greater consistency in the quality of teaching and learning in all classes. The school is successfully building on its strengths. Personal development is good. Most pupils behave well and relish opportunities to take responsibility, for example as members of the school council. The curriculum offers a good range of activities and benefits from good links with local schools.

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The head is quietly efficient and her vision for sustained improvement has widespread support. A small minority of parents have some concerns about behaviour and the consistency of teaching. However, the great majority recognise the improvements which have taken place in some key areas and report 'a burst of fresh air in the school.' The new and relatively inexperienced leadership and management team is committed to improvement but as yet has relatively undeveloped roles. There has been limited evaluation of some areas such as provision for the gifted and talented, because the leadership has focused on other key priorities for improvement. However, the recent track record of successful change, the improved achievement, and the shared commitment to continue this, mean that the school has a good capacity to improve further.

## Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

### Grade: 2

Children join Reception with levels in line with, or above those typical of this age group. They go on to make good progress in all areas, but particularly in social and emotional development. This is evident in the way they quickly learn to settle to their tasks, and show good interest and enjoyment in activities. Children achieve well and are on course to reach levels of knowledge and skills in line with those expected for their age by the time they join Year 1. Experienced Reception staff teach lively and interesting lessons, with a good balance between group activities directed by teachers and those chosen by the children individually. Although overall provision is good, and well led, there is no suitable covered area, which results in limited opportunities for outdoor learning in inclement weather. Parents are closely involved in their children's learning and there are good links with the local playgroup, helping with the smooth induction of children into the school.

### What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that the teaching across the school has a greater impact on improving standards and accelerating the progress pupils make.
- Improve the way teachers use assessment to help them plan lessons that provide tasks which better match the needs of pupils across the ability range, particularly the more able.
- Develop the management roles of the leadership team and key staff so that everyone is better able to focus on the right priorities for improvement aimed at raising standards in all subjects.

A small proportion of schools whose overall effectiveness is judged as satisfactory, but which have areas of underperformance, will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next Section 5 inspection.

## Achievement and standards

### Grade: 3

The 2007 national test results for pupils in Year 6 showed that overall standards were close to the national average, with standards in English higher than in mathematics and science. Standards in the current Year 6 are below average in all three subjects. However, the majority of these Year 6 pupils, especially the boys, joined the school with low levels of attainment. They are achieving satisfactorily in relation to these low starting points. The performance of pupils in Years 1 and 2 is currently better than in recent years, and the recent gap in performance between younger pupils and those higher up the school is narrowing. Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities achieve in line with most other pupils.

The improvement in pupils' achievement and in progress over time is due to well-targeted support and more stable staffing, but also to several initiatives introduced since the previous inspection. These include a programme of phonics teaching and better use of assessment. Although beginning to bear fruit, these developments are not yet fully embedded throughout the school. Sometimes a few higher attainers do not achieve to their potential, due to a lack of consistent challenge and the difficulty which some pupils have in focusing when not directly supervised by the teacher.

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

### **Grade: 2**

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good, as reflected in pupils' response to an assembly on 'friendship'. Pupils display very positive attitudes to other cultures, with their understanding enhanced, for example, by visiting Hindu temples and synagogues. Inspectors agree with pupils that their behaviour is good, except very occasionally in a small minority of lessons when learners do not respond to less interesting teaching. Attendance is average, with good systems to follow up absences. Pupils enjoy coming to school and are positive about their learning and after school clubs. Pupils understand the significance of the changes in canteen provision, and there is a good take-up of sporting opportunities. They also enjoy contributing to the school and the wider community, for example through involvement in productions such as *Oliver*, organising play for younger children, and fund raising for charities. Pupils enjoy working together, but some weaknesses in literacy and numeracy skills limit the development of their independent study skills.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 3**

A more stable teaching staff has improved teaching and learning, although teaching is not yet consistent enough to ensure good progress in all classes. Where the teaching promotes good learning, it is lively and sustains enthusiasm, and displays high expectations and challenge. This was evident, for example, in a geography lesson which excited pupils as they worked through a range of imaginative activities, whilst learning the skills of map making. In less successful lessons, the work is less challenging and not always matched to the needs of a minority of more able pupils. Teachers do not use lesson objectives and marking consistently when showing pupils how to improve their work. Sometimes teachers talk for too long and give insufficient scope to enable pupils to learn independently. However, most pupils are now making better progress, because the school is monitoring teaching more constructively and putting more emphasis on what makes good learning.

### **Curriculum and other activities**

#### **Grade: 2**

A particular strength of the good curriculum is the range of enrichment activities outside the classroom, such as Irish dancing and a range of sports. Parents testify to the impact on enthusiasm and pupils' well being. The school makes good use of other schools' facilities and expertise to teach swimming and French well. Year 3 pupils enjoy learning judo. Mathematics provision benefits from strong links with local cluster schools. Provision for ICT has improved. Younger children enjoy the themed approach to topics through the 'Bear' project. The school enhances personal development and social skills well through a programme of emotional literacy. There are imaginative plans in hand to create a more integrated curriculum for the youngest pupils.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 3**

Care, support and guidance are satisfactory, because pupils feel well supported and safe in school, and say that they can turn to adults for help. Pupils with learning difficulties are quickly identified and given appropriate support. Child protection procedures are secure, and there are effective arrangements to follow up absences. However, although there is some good use of targets to help pupils improve, teachers do not use assessment and marking consistently enough to ensure that pupils can always build on what they already know and can do.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 3**

The head teacher is supported by a governing body which now has a better appreciation of the strengths and weaknesses of the school's provision and the need to hold the school to account. Between them, they have a clear understanding of the need to maintain the improvement begun since the previous inspection. The head teacher has adopted a more rigorous approach to monitoring. The resulting strategic plan is now a realistic and practical tool for improvement. The school's self-evaluation is accurate. It has resulted in a range of sensible strategies geared to improving standards and achievement, particularly by focusing on how best to support pupils' learning and by improving the consistency of the teaching. The school makes good use of support staff to provide extra help for underachieving pupils. It has also established productive links with other schools, to provide more facilities and expertise in areas such as foreign language teaching. New leaders and managers are in place but their roles are not yet clearly defined. Although committed to improvement, they are only just coming to terms with issues such as using information from assessments of pupils to help drive up standards, and ironing out some remaining inconsistencies in the teaching and learning.

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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>	3
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?	2
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

### Achievement and standards

<b>How well do learners achieve?</b>	3
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	3

### Personal development and well-being

<b>How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	3
The behaviour of learners	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3

### The quality of provision

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?</b>	3
<b>How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?</b>	2
<b>How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?</b>	3

<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.

**Annex A**

**Leadership and management**

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	3
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3
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**

4 December 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Rowlands Castle St John's Church of England Controlled Primary School, Rowland's Castle, PO9 6BB

Thank you for welcoming us into your school. We enjoyed talking to you and seeing you at work in lessons.

Your school is now providing a satisfactory standard of education and has improved since the previous inspection. The school no longer needs a notice to improve.

We were impressed by the way in which you behave well and enjoy taking responsibility when helping others and representing your friends on the school council. We agree with you that the school looks after you well and that you feel safe. We understand why in particular you enjoy fun activities like the after-school clubs and judo in lesson time. We agree with the many parents who told us that your head teacher has improved the school a lot. The school makes you feel valued and we enjoyed talking to you about what you liked in school and what could be improved.

We have asked the school to make some more improvements. Although most of you do well in lessons, many of you could do even better. You have several teachers who have new jobs in the school and we have asked them to make sure that they give you work which challenges you even more, especially for the cleverest pupils. We have asked the school to give you more information on how to improve your work and get even better results. We have also asked the head teacher to give more responsibility to some staff.

Once again, thank you for your time and help when we visited your school, and good luck for the future.

Yours sincerely

John Laver

Lead inspector