

Rowans Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	117257
Local Authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	312548
Inspection dates	30 June –1 July 2008
Reporting inspector	Marianne Harris

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	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	158
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr George Dowling
Headteacher	Mrs Clare Hollingsworth
Date of previous school inspection	20 October 2003
School address	Rowans Welwyn Garden City Hertfordshire AL7 1NZ
Telephone number	01707 321203
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Age group	3-11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This school is smaller than most, although the number on roll is rising, with more than the usual number of pupils joining the school part-way through their education. The proportion of pupils who have learning difficulties and disabilities is average but the range of particular needs is wide. They are mainly for physical disabilities, autism and other behaviour-related difficulties. Pupils' attainment on entry to the school varies, but is generally below average. There have been many changes of staff recently, with the entire teaching staff, including the headteacher, being in post for no more than three years.

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. Parents and pupils comment on the recent improvements and have nothing but praise for the headteacher and deputy headteacher, who have led the drive to raise standards and increase pupils' achievement. Standards are now above average at the end of Year 2 and Year 6, with pupils of all abilities achieving well. The trend has been one of continuous improvement over the last few years. By the end of Year 6, pupils have made good progress in English and mathematics and satisfactory progress in science. The school has recognised this and the focus is now rightly on science.

Pupils' personal development is outstanding. Behaviour is exemplary. Some pupils find it hard to behave in an acceptable way, but the excellent care, guidance and support they receive enable them to be included in lessons, make friends and become valued members of the school community. This is testimony to the very inclusive nature of the school. There are high expectations that everyone will be accepted and make good progress, whatever their needs, and the skills of outside agencies are used very effectively. All pupils get along very well together and support each other. One child commented, 'We look out for each other here.' There are 'playground friends' who support those who feel lonely at break-times, and a school council which has a particular focus each term. Pupils speak enthusiastically about the contribution they make to school life and the improvements in which they have played a part. All pupils have a clear understanding about keeping healthy and safe and, when asked if they enjoy school, they wholeheartedly agree that it is a good place to be.

Pupils are particularly excited about the special themed weeks and days that enrich the curriculum and make learning interesting. The staff are now looking to make the day-to-day curriculum more exciting and introduce lessons where subjects are linked together more effectively, so that learning is lively and fun. Teaching is good across the school. The purpose of each lesson is clear and teachers encourage pupils to assess for themselves how well they are doing. The teaching of science is not as strong, because there is a reliance on printed sheets which limit the opportunities pupils have to record for themselves. Marking is good, with positive comments as well as ideas on how pupils could improve their work. In English and mathematics books these comments are often followed up, but not always in science where some work is left unfinished.

The leadership and management of the school are good. The headteacher and deputy headteacher work together extremely well and have managed the recent staff changes in a measured way. Systems and routines are securely in place, with the progress pupils make being tracked effectively, so that programmes can be put in place to ensure that no-one falls behind. The new senior leadership team is making a good contribution to school improvement, but staff are relatively new in post. Governance is good. Governors are supportive of the school and challenge the leadership team over decisions they make and the standards pupils reach. There has been good improvement since the last inspection and there is good capacity to improve further because everyone works together as a team to make sure that the school is a happy, safe and welcoming place.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

From a low starting point children in the Foundation Stage make good progress. By the time they enter Year 1 they have the skills and knowledge expected for their age. The Foundation Stage is well organised with a good range of activities that covers all areas of learning. There is a good balance of activities that are led by adults and those that children choose for themselves. This results in children learning early reading, writing and mathematical skills effectively and becoming more confident in making friends and settling into school routines. Work is challenging for most children, although there are times when there is a reliance on printed sheets that mainly occupy the children rather than teach them key skills.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise expectations of what pupils can achieve in science by reducing the use of worksheets and ensuring that pupils complete their work.
- Seek ways to further enhance the curriculum by building on the exciting work in themed weeks where subjects link together.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils achieve well, whatever their ability. In the 2007 national tests, pupils at the end of Year 2 reached standards that were above average in reading, writing and mathematics. Current standards for pupils in Year 2 show that standards are above average. Tests for pupils at the end of Year 6 last year showed that standards were above average in English and mathematics, and average in science. Current standards are similar. This represents good progress for these pupils, who reached generally average standards when they were at the end of Year 2. Pupils do not make as much progress in science as they do in English and mathematics, and this is now rightly a focus for the school. Pupils who find learning difficult achieve well because they are supported very effectively in their academic and personal development. Those who join the school part-way through their education make good progress because of the robust induction systems that assess their needs and put in place relevant programmes to support their learning.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils' personal development is outstanding. They know that they are valued as individuals and they are aware of and respect differences in background and culture. They enjoy coming to school and are very proud of it. They share the view expressed by one pupil that it is 'a brilliant school'. Behaviour in classes and around the school is exemplary, and pupils understand clearly the sanctions that apply to any lapses. They have a great sense of their responsibility for each other and say that bullying is rare. However, they know what to do should it occur. They have a very good understanding of how to be healthy and stay safe. Pupils understand very well their role in the school community and play an active part through the school council. They also contribute to the wider community by taking part in local events, such as singing carols to the elderly. They are well prepared with the skills they need for future life, including team work.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Pupils make good progress because teaching and learning are good. The purpose of each lesson is clear and pupils know what they have to do to be successful. Teachers' marking usually gives good encouragement whilst letting pupils know what it is they have to do to improve their work. Relationships throughout the school are good and this makes a significant contribution to pupils' learning and their personal development. Teaching assistants are skilful at supporting pupils with particular needs and in ensuring that they have full access to activities in lessons. Pupils are beginning to accurately assess for themselves how much they have learnt in a lesson and to identify what they need to do next. Teacher expectations in science are not as high as they are in English and mathematics and this has resulted in lower standards in this subject.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The school provides a very good range of extra activities for the pupils. There are many clubs open to those from Reception to Year 6. These cover diverse activities such as cookery, gardening and many sporting opportunities. Visits into the local area and beyond and visitors into the school enrich learning and make it more interesting for the pupils. They particularly enjoy the themed weeks or days where they study a subject in depth and share their work with other classes. Whilst the day-to-day curriculum results in pupils' making good progress overall, there are fewer occasions when teachers successfully link subjects together to present a creative and exciting learning experience for the pupils.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

The school's care for its pupils is outstanding. All legal requirements for safeguarding are met and there are strong procedures for child protection. The school provides great support for individuals who have learning or other difficulties. A lunchtime club is a great asset for those who find this time difficult and need a quieter environment. Attendance, which is satisfactory, is monitored carefully by the school, good attendance is rewarded and absences followed up. The school has very good systems for the assessment and tracking of pupils' progress, which enable it to offer good guidance and set individual targets that pupils understand. Pupils feel safe in school and know that there is someone they can turn to if they are in difficulty.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher and deputy headteacher provide strong and clear leadership to the school. They share a common vision and lead the drive to raise the achievement of pupils and have managed the recent turnover of teachers very effectively. This has resulted in consistency in the quality of provision through their effective monitoring of teaching and learning. Subject leaders, although new to their roles, take suitable responsibility for the monitoring and development of their subjects. There is a strong emphasis on the inclusion of all learners, with very good support for those who have difficulties or disabilities. The school's self-evaluation

is accurate, with areas for development identified clearly. The governing body knows the school well and has a good understanding of its strengths and weaknesses. With the progress it has already made, the school is well placed to improve further.

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

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ 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 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	2

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?	2
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?	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	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2
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

2 July 2008

Dear Children

Inspection of Rowans Primary School, Welwyn Garden City, AL7 1NZ

Thank you for welcoming us into your school recently and for letting us know how proud you are of what you have achieved. We are now writing to let you know what we found out.

We think that yours is a good school. You achieve well, whatever your ability. We have asked your teachers to help you more in science because we noticed that some of the work was not finished in your books, and there were a lot of printed sheets for you to fill in. This means that there are few opportunities to record for yourselves. We are asking you to make sure that work is finished and that it is neat and tidy.

We were really impressed with your excellent behaviour. I particularly enjoyed visiting lunch club and talking about how well you all get along. Some of you told us that you look out for each other because this is a brilliant school. It is good to see everyone being so friendly and supporting each other. Your teachers and other adults work very hard to make sure that you are all safe in school and that you make good progress. Many of your parents told us that the teachers are friendly and approachable and that they help sort out any problems you have with learning.

I must mention the lovely work the whole school carried out whilst looking at the paintings of Jackson Pollock. What beautiful displays around the school! Some of you said that you really enjoy special themed days or weeks and feel you learn best during these times. We have asked your headteacher to find ways of extending this so that you have more opportunities for exciting work.

Once again, thank you for being so friendly and welcoming. We wish you all the best for the future.

Marianne Harris

Lead inspector