

Rickmansworth Park Junior Mixed and Infant School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	117304
Local Authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	312562
Inspection dates	29–30 September 2008
Reporting inspector	Michele Messaoudi

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.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	5–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	203
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	0
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Rodger Greene
Headteacher	Mrs Peta Dyke
Date of previous school inspection	6 December 2004
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Park Road Rickmansworth Hertfordshire WD3 1HU
Telephone number	01923770265

Age group	5–11
Inspection dates	29–30 September 2008
Inspection number	312562

Fax number

01923776558

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Rickmansworth Park Junior Mixed and Infant School is an average sized primary school. Most pupils are from White British backgrounds and the proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups is about the same as in most schools. There are fewer pupils who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities, additional linguistic, or social and emotional needs than in most schools. The school has the Healthy School Award and an Active Mark for physical education (PE).

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Rickmansworth Park Junior Mixed and Infant School is a good school that has improved significantly since the last inspection. Parents are very positive about the school. They, their children and the inspectors identify the positive learning atmosphere, the partnership with parents and the effective leadership as key factors contributing to the school's success. The older pupils say, 'This is a school where children are happy and hard working, and staff plan special things to do.' The school works at several levels to unite the community. For example, parenting workshops are held to support parents and family learning events, such as cooking or fitness days, are organised for the enjoyment of parents and children. Pupils from minority ethnic groups feel well included in school life as a result of the school's commitment to providing good care, guidance and support to all pupils.

Since the last inspection, the leadership has improved the provision for spiritual, moral and social education by implementing a coherent programme of personal, social and health education (PSHE) enhanced by lively assemblies, and focussing on pupils' emotional development. As a result, pupils enjoy learning and their attendance is good. However, a small core of pupils often arrive in school late despite the school's efforts to improve punctuality. Pupils' general cultural development is fostered satisfactorily. Pupils and parents have full confidence in the school's provision for pupils' welfare, health and safety. Pupils feel very safe and free from bullying.

The headteacher provides very strong leadership that is sharply focused on improving pupils' learning. The leadership of middle managers has improved significantly and is now good. The school leaders and governors work as a cohesive team that devises the correct strategies to drive up standards further, based on accurate self-evaluation. This puts them in a good position to make further improvements. The good assessment and central tracking procedures have a positive impact on pupils' learning. However, in EYFS, assessment is at an early stage and so standards are satisfactory and children's progress is satisfactory. Standards are above average in Key Stages 1 and 2 and pupils from Year 1 to Year 6 achieve well. In 2008, pupils achieved very highly in writing in Key Stage 1 and in science in Key Stage 2. The 2008 national test results show that no groups of pupils underachieved and achievement targets were met or exceeded. However, whilst senior leaders monitor standards and pupils' progress well in reading, writing and mathematics, they do not track pupils' progress in speaking and listening and pupils' speaking skills are not as highly developed as they could be.

The improved leadership of subject leaders and commitment to continuous staff development impact positively on the quality of teaching and learning. Marking is consistently good and really helpful in showing pupils how to improve. A consistent approach to improving the quality of questioning and opportunities for creative learning ensures that best practice is almost fully embedded and teaching and learning are good.

The senior managers ensure that the curriculum is broad and balanced and serves the needs of all pupils. They have addressed the key issues raised during the last inspection successfully. They have developed information and communication technology (ICT) in the last four years and, as a result, computers are used as effective learning tools in all subjects. They have remodelled the planning of mathematics and science and pupils now have regular opportunities for investigative work.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 3

Children get a sound start to their education and enjoy their time in the Reception class. The children like learning about signs of autumn because guided walks around the grounds are used well. Children's learning and welfare are given a high priority. This allows children to settle quickly into school life because the parents' knowledge of their children is used successfully. Children's personal development is good because staff form effective relationships with children and manage them attentively. Their behaviour is good and they are keen to learn. Children from all backgrounds play happily together. The children adopt healthy lifestyles effectively because they eat a balanced diet and take regular exercise. Children achieve satisfactorily in relation to starting points that are in line with expectations for four-year-olds. Standards are average by the end of the Reception year but could be higher. This is because although assessments are carried out satisfactorily and regularly, the next steps children will make are not always recorded in sufficient detail. Booklets successfully record children's learning journeys and development in all areas. Staff help children suitably to develop their key skills. The thoughtful organisation of resources gives children opportunities to choose inside and outside activities for themselves. The leadership of this stage of education is satisfactory. Self-evaluation is used carefully and key priorities for development are identified. Although staff have an up-to-date qualification in first aid at work, they do not have a first-aid qualification for young children.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards in the Reception class ensuring children make good progress in all key areas of learning.
- Raise standards in speaking and listening skills by using tracking systems more effectively to identify underachievement.
- Improve pupils' punctuality.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils make good progress by the time they leave Year 6 in relation to their starting points in Reception. Pupils who have additional learning or linguistic needs achieve as well as their peers owing to the effective support they receive from the staff. Pupils make good progress from Year 1 to Year 2. Standards at the end of Year 2 have been at least above average over the last four years. The results of the 2008 assessments show that standards were exceptionally high in writing, above average in reading and mathematics, but average in speaking and listening.

In Key Stage 2, standards have been above average in English, mathematics and science over the last four years, albeit with some fluctuation reflecting the varying starting points of these groups. The results of the 2008 national tests show that a higher proportion of pupils have made good progress in the three core subjects than in preceding years.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils feel well cared for and well supported by staff. They enjoy learning at their school and particularly value having 'teachers who re-explain what we do not understand' and a wide enrichment programme. Their enjoyment is reflected in their good attendance, good behaviour

and excellent attitude to learning. Most of all, they appreciate the positive atmosphere of the school and the harmonious relationships between pupils. They develop an exceptionally good commitment to healthy lifestyle through the many opportunities for physical exercise, the PSHE programme and events such as 'Healthy eating school week' that give them practical experiences. Through the activities of the school council, they contribute to such school improvements as refurbishing a pond and creating a central garden. They take pride in showing their parents what they have learnt by making presentations every term. They develop communication skills and confidence by taking part in various school productions. Pupils develop a satisfactory understanding of other cultures and faiths through various areas of the curriculum and assemblies, and the older pupils explain that they gained a keener appreciation of diversity from links with a school in Zambia. Whilst pupils' general cultural development is fostered satisfactorily through various areas of the curriculum and assemblies, the multicultural aspect is not sufficiently enhanced by practical or first-hand experiences, and this has been identified by the leadership. The good skills pupils develop in literacy, numeracy and ICT, coupled with their good level of self-discipline and self-confidence, prepare them well for their future.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching is effective in helping pupils to achieve well. Lessons are generally well planned to match the needs of individual pupils closely. Staff share clear learning objectives with pupils and the best teaching sets consistently specific success criteria against which pupils of varying ability can evaluate their successes. The use of open-ended questioning that makes pupils think, helps them refine their understanding and keeps them actively engaged, is a strong feature of most teaching. However, on occasion, staff do not promote active learning sufficiently in the introduction of lessons by talking for too long. Skilled teaching assistants and teachers are deployed effectively to give extra attention to those who need it. Whilst in most lessons, staff assess pupils' learning consistently, in some, the staff do not check pupils' learning sufficiently well and so they do not have the information they need to help pupils progress at the rate of which they are capable. Staff use a variety of methods to maintain pupils' interest and match their different learning styles. Visual resources and computers are used effectively to assist learning.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

A good curriculum enables pupils to study a broad range of subjects, and this contributes to their good progress. Links between subjects are being developed and refined, with a particular emphasis on the increased use of literacy in other subjects. Pupils with learning difficulties are carefully identified and are provided with a good range of support. Good use is made of teachers' specialist interests and of sports coaches to support the teaching of science, music and PE. Pupils learn to speak French from Year 3 to Year 6. There is effective use of ICT to develop pupils' skills in all areas of learning. Provision for gifted and talented pupils is sound and, because the school is always looking for ways to improve, there are plans to develop this further in the near future. A wide range of visits, clubs and Christmas and summer productions and class assemblies enrich the curriculum well.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

All staff offer pupils a dedicated and good level of care. This ensures that pupils develop into mature young people. All staff successfully support pupils' personal needs and welfare. Pupils are encouraged to lead healthy lives extremely successfully and they take safety issues seriously. The school works carefully to safeguard pupils and procedures meet requirements. Arrangements to settle them into the school are very good whether they arrive in the Reception year or at any other time. Older pupils look after new arrivals really well when they act as a 'buddy' and take younger ones into lunch for the first time. The termly tracking of pupils' progress is effective and the school identifies pupils who would benefit from further support. Pupils' speaking and listening skills are not tracked effectively and so the school's leadership does not know if they are underachieving in this area of learning.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher leads the school very successfully and she has a great passion for learning. She is supported well by the senior leadership team. There is a strong desire to make the best possible provision for the pupils. The school uses effective approaches to find out how well it is doing. Its self-review has accurately identified strengths and areas for development. For example, this year's work to improve pupils' attainment in Year 6 is effective and so standards have risen significantly. Senior leaders also correctly recognise the need to continue to improve standards and the rate of children's progress in the Reception class. The subject leaders for literacy, numeracy and science are working carefully to develop their subjects. Pupils who have additional needs or those who speak English as an additional language are supported effectively. However, their progress is not monitored thoroughly and so middle managers are not clear whether these pupils have made the expected progress. Governors use the school development plan well and are successfully involved in improving the school. The school makes a good contribution to community cohesion by providing a wide range of classes and workshops for parents and others.

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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?	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	3
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	3
How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	2
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	3
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	2
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	3

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/or disabilities make progress	2

¹Grade 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

How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	2
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	2

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of 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?	2

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	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	2
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	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

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

1 October 2008

Dear pupils,

Inspection of Rickmansworth Park Junior Mixed and Infant School, Rickmansworth, WD3 1HU

Thank you to all of you for making us so welcome, and a special thanks to those of you who gave up part of their lunch break to tell us about your school. We enjoyed watching you work and play, and talking to some of you. We agree with you that your school is a good place to be and you are fortunate to attend such a happy and friendly school. Good things about your school include the fact that:

- you really enjoy all the things you do at school
- staff care for you well, listen to you thoughtfully and make the school safe for you
- you enjoy the curriculum, especially the educational visits, and the school works exceptionally hard to encourage you to develop healthy habits
- teaching is good and the staff work hard to make lessons interesting
- you behave well and you contribute actively in lessons
- you make good progress in your work because staff show you exactly how to improve
- your headteacher and senior teachers have good ideas about ways to improve the school and help you learn even better
- the school and your parents work closely together for your benefit.

We have asked your school to look at how they can make things even better. The most important things are to:

- make sure that the children in the Reception class are helped to achieve as well as the other children in the school
- monitor the progress you make in your speaking and listening skills
- improve the punctuality of those of you who arrive late in school.

Keep enjoying all the things you are learning at Rickmansworth Park Junior Mixed and Infant School and continue to apply yourselves to contribute to the success of the school.

Michele Messaoudi

Lead inspector