

# Studlands Rise First School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	117331
<b>Local Authority</b>	HERTFORDSHIRE LA
<b>Inspection number</b>	312573
<b>Inspection date</b>	4 December 2007
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Helen Ranger

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>	First
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3-9
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School	134
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mrs S Ginsberg
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs J Saunders
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	18 April 2005
<b>School address</b>	Studlands Rise Royston Hertfordshire SG8 9HB
<b>Telephone number</b>	01763 243930
<b>Fax number</b>	01763 243930

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector. The inspector evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues:

- how well pupils achieve across the school as a whole;
- the standard of pupils' personal development and well-being;
- the main characteristics of teaching and learning.

The inspector gathered evidence from observations of lessons, samples of pupils' work, discussions with pupils, staff and governors, and from questionnaires and letters from parents. The main documents used by the school in monitoring and strategic planning were examined. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but the inspector found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given in its self-evaluation, were not justified, and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

## Description of the school

This is a smaller than average school situated in a residential area of the small town of Royston and most of the pupils live nearby. The provision includes a morning nursery. Almost all pupils are from White British backgrounds that are relatively advantaged. Virtually all speak English as their first language. An average proportion of pupils have learning difficulties or disabilities. Children start school in the Nursery with attainment that is broadly in line with what is expected of three year olds nationally.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 2

Studlands Rise First School has improved rapidly over the past few years. It provides a good education and gives good value for money. The senior staff, and particularly the headteacher, have ensured that teaching and learning are effective and that the standards achieved by pupils have risen well. One parent summed up the positive views held by many when she wrote, 'I constantly see my child grow in knowledge and confidence'. In addition to working well with pupils' families, the school has forged strong links with other local schools. As a result, there is a smooth transition between the various phases of education and external expertise and support are used well. Partnerships in mathematics, sport and information and communication technology (ICT) have been developed to pupils' benefit.

Pupils achieve well academically. The youngest get a good start in Nursery and Reception. This is built on extremely well in Key Stage 1. Standards by the end of Year 2 have risen sharply since the school's last inspection in 2005. Pupils have reached exceptionally high standards in reading, writing and mathematics for the past two years. In Years 3 and 4, pupils make good progress and attainment is above the level expected nationally. Last year in Year 4, the great majority reached above the expected standard in English. Performance in mathematics was particularly good in comparison to other first schools in the local authority.

Pupils' personal development is equally good, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Excellent levels of attendance demonstrate pupils' enjoyment of school and the commitment of their families. Pupils are lively, confident and articulate. They get on well together and help each other out. They have a good grasp of how to lead healthy and safe lives. While behaviour is generally of a high standard, indeed often exemplary, the behaviour of a small number is occasionally not managed well enough and spoils the enjoyment of others. Pupils and parents praise the 'buddy' scheme that pairs pupils in Reception and Year 3. Pupils know their views are valued by staff. This was typified by the school council's contributions to the recent courtyard project, which incorporated pupils' ideas in its design. They are very proud of the result.

The combination of pupils' good social skills and their academic achievements equip them well for the next stage of education and give them firm foundations for their future lives. Pupils from all backgrounds and of all capabilities do equally well. Nonetheless, the school is not complacent. It tracks individual progress rigorously in its quest to ensure that each child is catered for as well as possible. For example, having improved rates of progress for those with learning difficulties and for the most able pupils, it has launched an initiative to check that the average pupils are achieving as well as they can. The coordinator for pupils with learning difficulties works closely with the senior staff, class teachers and teaching assistants to ensure that any individual who will benefit from some extra academic or personal help is identified and supported.

Pupils do well because teaching and learning are good. The school has managed recent staff changes well. The appointment of several younger, less experienced staff has brought new energy to the team. Most but not all lessons are taught well. The senior staff monitor the quality of teaching regularly and are rightly determined to make sure all lessons are equally effective. Good relationships between adults and pupils are evident. Classrooms are calm and purposeful places for learning. A good curriculum is provided, with an appropriate focus on key skills and practical learning and this promotes pupils' considerable enjoyment of lessons.

The teaching assistants work closely with class teachers to provide additional support as appropriate. Occasionally pupils are given tasks that do not take enough account of their prior learning and are either too easy or too hard.

Adults in the school offer good care, guidance and support. Pupils' health and safety are monitored carefully and the requirements for protecting pupils, for instance through vetting staff, are met. The good assessment and tracking systems ensure that teachers' support for pupils' overall academic development is good. The quality of marking and feedback to pupils is currently being reviewed by the staff. Arrangements are not yet fully effective. There is considerable variation in how well adults communicate to pupils how they can improve, and in how far pupils are enabled to reflect on any advice they are given.

The headteacher's drive, vision and high expectations of the staff and pupils have been instrumental in the school's rapid improvement. School self-evaluation is rigorous. Staff say that, in particular, the systems for analysing pupils' progress and setting challenging targets have improved their practice. The senior leaders are developing the newer staff well to take on roles as subject coordinators. Governors give satisfactory and improving support. Following a period when recruitment of governors proved difficult, the chair of governors is working determinedly and competently to ensure that new governors play a full part in the school's monitoring and development. The recent history of the school demonstrates that it has a good capacity for further improvement.

## **Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage**

### **Grade: 2**

Pupils do well in the Foundation Stage. They reach standards that are above those expected nationally by the end of Reception in all areas of learning. Their personal, social and emotional development is particularly good because of careful planning by staff. For example, the introduction of Nursery lunchtime has added a valuable dimension to the opportunities for pupils to socialise and grow in maturity. A new team of staff has established itself well and there is close liaison between the two age groups. The accommodation has been developed considerably and there has been a good focus on linking indoor and outdoor activities. The school has good plans to provide a covered outdoor area so that its resources can be used to the full throughout the year.

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

- Ensure that all teaching matches the quality of the best lessons.
- Use marking and feedback to pupils more consistently to tell them how to improve and help them to reflect on their learning.

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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 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 <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 disabilities make progress	2

### Personal development and well-being

How good is 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	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	1
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 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?	2

<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>	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 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	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



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

5 December 2007

Dear Children

Inspection of Studlands Rise First School, Royston SG8 9HB

This letter is to thank you for your warm welcome and help during my recent visit. A special thank you goes to the pupils in Year 3 and Year 4 who told me so much about your school. Many of your parents wrote to tell me that you go to a good school and I agree with them!

All the adults in your school work together to give you lots of interesting activities. You are taught well, right from Nursery. As a result you reach a good standard in your work, for example in literacy and numeracy. You also do well in your personal development. It was obvious to me how much you enjoy school and get on well together. You told me about how your teachers help you to understand how to stay healthy and safe. You know that the adults care for you a lot and help you with any problems. They listen to your ideas, such as those that come from the school council. I know you were pleased to be involved in the design of the courtyard area.

Mrs Saunders has worked with the staff and governors to make sure that your school keeps getting better and better. I have asked the adults to look at two areas for even more improvement. Firstly, I would like them to make sure all your lessons are equally good. This means that the work should be at just the right level for you so that you behave and learn really well. You can help with this by always trying to do your best. Secondly, I think your teachers are right to try to improve the ways they tell you how you are getting on. I want them to make sure that their marking and comments to you tell you what you have done well and what you need to do next. Your help is needed with this too. Please listen to what they tell you, read what they write in your books carefully and try to do what they suggest.

It was a great pleasure to meet you all. I hope you keep enjoying all that your school offers you.

Best wishes

Mrs Helen Ranger

Inspector