

Rotherfield Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	131740
Local Authority	Islington
Inspection number	315860
Inspection dates	25–26 June 2008
Reporting inspector	Ruth McFarlane

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	328
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Carolyn Wagstaff
Headteacher	Miss Elaine Adams
Date of previous school inspection	11 October 2004
School address	Rotherfield Street Islington London N1 3EE
Telephone number	020 7226 6620
Fax number	020 7359 1083

Age group	3–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

About half the pupils in this larger than average urban primary school are White British. The largest minority ethnic groups have Black Caribbean or Turkish backgrounds. More than an average number of pupils have English as an additional language. Very few pupils have statements of educational need, but more than average have learning difficulties and/or disabilities, mostly for speech, language and communication, or behavioural, emotional and social difficulties. More pupils than average are eligible for free school meals. Extended services provide care before and after school.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Rotherfield Primary is a good school. 'The school is good in every respect. There's been much improvement recently,' sums up the opinions of the strongly supportive parents. The headteacher and her deputy are reaping the benefits of the importance they placed on staff development, so that a skilful team of well-trained managers is now in place. Under their clear direction, staff are successfully raising pupils' aspirations and achievement.

Outstanding care, guidance and support underpin the pupils' good personal development. Behaviour is excellent. This, and pupils' positive attitudes, helps them enjoy their lessons and prepare well for their futures. Pupils talk proudly of their 'Diana, Princess of Wales Memorial Award,' one of several awards the school holds. The citation praises pupils for 'making the difference in tackling bullying in the school and in the community'. Pupils explained that having 'Peer Buddies' in the playground helps them feel safe. Attendance and punctuality have shown considerable improvement this year in response to the school's unstinting efforts, though attendance is still not good enough. Extended provision, at each end of the day, provides support for pupils' welfare. Themed activity during the inspection showed that pupils know how to lead a healthy lifestyle. Their posters in support of a recent parliamentary bill earned praise in the House of Commons, recorded in the official report of parliamentary business. These experiences enrich the good curriculum pupils enjoy. Its strongest features are still developing, so the full benefits in helping pupils to achieve are not yet felt.

Pupils achieve well considering that the majority start school with skills and abilities which are well below those expected for their age. A good start is provided in the Foundation Stage. Thanks to the impact of their stringent measures to raise standards, the school has reversed the recent prolonged slump in Key Stage 1 results and is now back on track with a significant lift in performance. However, there is more to do as more able pupils are still not reaching the higher level in reading and writing at this key stage. Standards are broadly average by the time pupils leave Year 6. Careful measuring of pupils' progress is having a positive impact so that progress is good at all stages. Detailed analysis of how different groups of pupils are doing, such as those who are at an early stage of learning English, helps the school to meet the needs of all pupils successfully, including those with learning difficulties.

Teaching is more consistently good than at the time of the last inspection, and contributes well to pupils' enjoyment of learning, and their progress. Improved assessment and progress-checking helps teachers to plan interesting tasks geared to the different abilities. However, in some lessons, pupils' responses to questions posed are sometimes not followed up to extend learning. In these lessons, progress is not as rapid as it could be.

Leadership, management and governance are all good. Phase and subject leaders monitor their areas well. On the basis of systems and procedures now in place, and the strong teamwork evident, the school shows good capacity to make further improvements. All concerned appreciate that there is more still to do; the recent successful track record shows that it can be done.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children get off to a flying start. They make good progress because the Foundation Stage is a well-led, happy place. Parents voice their approval and typically say, 'Staff are always ready to help and support.' A good balance of play activities and those directed by the teachers is

offered, based on the recommended Foundation Stage curriculum. Emphasis on developing phonics (early letter and sounds work) from the start is already reaping benefits in progress. Opportunities for outdoor learning are restricted by difficult access, from the Reception class, to the dedicated outside area which, unlike the indoor facilities, is not stimulating enough. Children behave well. They show willingness to learn because they are well cared for and effectively taught. They show consideration, are willing to share and take their turn. Assessment is used well. By the end of Reception, children achieve well. Most are now reaching the standards expected for their age, a significant improvement on previous years.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the quality of, and access to, the Foundation Stage outdoor learning space, so that learning opportunities are as broad as possible.
- Raise standards in literacy at Key Stage 1 so that the more able pupils develop skills to achieve the higher level.
- Refine teaching to ensure questioning is sufficiently challenging so that pupils are expected to think more and extend their learning.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Inspection evidence shows that by the time pupils leave Year 6, standards are broadly average and the majority reach the expected levels in English, mathematics and science. The steep decline in standards recorded at Key Stage 1 in 2007 has been reversed, thanks to rigorous assessment and better teaching, but no pupil achieved the higher level in reading or writing. Standards at this stage are below average but pupils make good progress from their starting points at all stages. Strategies are in place to improve the performance of boys and younger pupils in each cohort, who achieve less well than nationally. There is no significant difference in the relative attainment of minority ethnic groups. Pupils for whom English is an additional language and those with learning needs perform particularly well because they are supported skilfully in their personal development and learning.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

The strength of pupils' personal development is reflected in their excellent behaviour and in the caring relationships between pupils and staff. Pupils fully understand how to stay safe and they show consideration for others. They know they need to have regular exercise and they enjoy school sport. They are keen participants of the 'walking bus' and several pupils enjoy cycling to school each day. Pupils enjoy school and acquire satisfactory basic skills. Attendance has depleted since the last inspection. Recent robust measures being employed by the school to combat lapses in punctuality and improve attendance are working, but attendance it is still below average. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. The School Council leads the excellent contribution the pupils make to the community. They take responsibility for presenting their views to governors and their ideas and opinions are valued. Their 'Peer Buddies' support group has gained national recognition for the service they provide in the school and the wider community, where they have presented their work to adult conferences. Older pupils operate 'Sheila's Fruit Stall' at playtimes. Pupils are acquiring good leadership and social skills and have very well-developed awareness of other cultures and religions.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching has improved and now occasionally it is outstanding. As a result, pupils make good progress. Teachers use a range of strategies to motivate pupils. Learning activities are well planned with a variety of tasks that engage and maintain pupils' interest. Sometimes expectations are not high enough and when this happens, progress slows. For instance, some questioning fails to encourage pupils to explore and develop their responses. Incisive assessment techniques and target setting is helping teachers to develop their use of data. Because of this, they deal with the needs of each individual with greater precision, enabling faster progress. Pupils who find learning difficult are especially well supported. Interactive whiteboards are used well to demonstrate teaching points and to engage and motivate pupils. Marking is thorough, praising the pupils' efforts and providing clear guidance on how to make further improvements. In the best lessons, pupils assess their own and each other's work, which is valuable in moving their learning forward.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is responsive to the needs of pupils and meets statutory requirements. There is good emphasis on developing literacy and numeracy skills and personal, social and health education. Cross-curricular work is included. A strong example combined several subjects in pupils' work on the recent parliamentary Marine Fisheries Bill. However, current cross-curricular planning - what the school refers to as 'blocking' subjects together - is sometimes not precise enough to ensure that breadth and depth in each component subject can be measured easily. The full impact on learning of the innovative work currently developing in information and communication technology (ICT) is not yet evident. Extended services and a good range of extra-curricular activities, well supported by pupils, enriches their personal development and learning. Links with university mathematics students inspires pupils' interest. Provision for pupils learning English as an additional language, and for pupils with learning difficulties is good and they achieve well in comparison with their national counterparts.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

The hallmark of the outstanding care, support and guidance provided is the total commitment of all adults in the school to providing nurturing support, and that encourages pupils to achieve. They implement the arrangements for safeguarding and child protection thoroughly. As a result, pupils feel very safe in school. The impact of the sensitive support pupils receive is plain to see in their self-assurance and willingness to learn. The inclusion team supports and nurtures vulnerable pupils and other groups very well indeed within the school and through liaison with outside agencies. Particularly thorough systems monitor progress meticulously in the core subjects individually as well as for each group of learners. Information drawn from this process is used to set challenging targets. Progress in other subjects is also checked. A comprehensive raft of strategies is in place, including input from governors, to improve pupils' attendance and punctuality. Arrangements are excellent for ensuring that pupils make a smooth transition each September into their new class, and to their secondary schools.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Support for the leadership of the school is voiced by parents. 'The school is well-led and managed' is typical of the comments received. The school has, just this year, effected a reverse to a serious decline in standards in Key Stage 1 that had been prolonged and worsening. Analysis and action have been recent because phase and subject leaders' effectiveness has improved. They are now working together as a cohesive team and have benefited from key training under good direction from the headteacher and her deputy. Monitoring is thorough in the main subjects, though less detailed for others. Equal opportunities are promoted vigorously and all pupils are included fully. The school has identified appropriate priorities for its next steps. It describes its strengths well but does not always relate provision clearly enough to benefits for pupils. It is well-supported by a well-led governing body that is pro-active in its support and discharges its responsibilities effectively. Challenging targets are being used successfully to lift achievement and move the school forward. Pupils' good progress, positive behaviour and high level personal skills are the result. The school has a good capacity to improve because all have a clear view of what needs to be done and demonstrate determination to act together to succeed.

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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 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?	2
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	2
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	3

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	2
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

08 July 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Rotherfield Primary School, London, N1 3EE

I want to say a big thank you for welcoming the inspection team to your school. We enjoyed chatting to so many of you, finding out what you think about your school and seeing how well you are doing in your lessons.

Lots of you told us you think your school is good and we agree with you. Your teachers and the headteacher give you a good education. You told us how you learn to be responsible. We think the poster work you did about the Marine Fisheries Bill, which involved your MP, is really good. To think you managed to get mentioned in Hansard, the official parliamentary record! That's a real achievement!

We liked what you said about how you look out for each other, and how your 'Peer Buddies' help you. You told us the teachers look after you very well and we agree.

Your behaviour is excellent. In lessons, you listen carefully to your teachers and work hard and we could see that you have learned a great deal this year. Well done! Keep trying your best! We were pleased to learn that you are getting to school on time far more often. Do keep this up.

Although we know you are trying hard, we think your teaching could be even better, by making sure the questions you are asked in lessons make you think harder. What's more, we think school should expect you to be able to work out the answers! We think that will help you to do better. Another thing we have asked the school to do is to help you reach higher levels in your reading and writing, especially those of you in Year 2. That would really give you a good start to the work in the following years.

You know the little ones' outside area? It's not very easy for the Reception children to reach, and it can't be used when the weather's bad. We have asked your school to do its best to make it easier to reach and use, whatever the weather.

You can help these things to happen by continuing to work hard and enjoy your learning, as we saw you doing. Most of all, we know you are proud of your school. Well done for helping to make it such a friendly and fun place to learn.

Yours sincerely

Ruth McFarlane

Lead Inspector