

Rectory CofE Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	104797
Local Authority	St Helens
Inspection number	324104
Inspection dates	21–22 January 2009
Reporting inspector	Eithne Proffitt

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	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	165
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 T Narayanan
Headteacher	Mrs Janet Prowse
Date of previous school inspection	15 May 2006
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Rectory Road North Ashton Ashton-in-Makerfield Wigan Lancashire WN4 0QF
Telephone number	01744 678470

Age group	3–11
Inspection dates	21–22 January 2009
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Fax number

01744 678475

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This is a smaller than average school. The majority of its pupils live locally in an area that varies in its levels of social and economic challenge. Almost all pupils are of White British heritage and none of the few pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds require additional support with speaking or understanding English. The school's Early Year's and Foundation Stage (EYFS) comprises nursery and Reception classes. The number of pupils eligible for free school meals is above average. The percentage having learning difficulties and/or disabilities is high. The school has recently established a resource base for pupils with autistic spectrum disorder. The school has attained a range of external awards including the Basic Skills Award, Investors in People, National Healthy Schools Award, Activemark, St. Helen's Quality Mark for the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) and has met the Financial Management Standard in Schools.

There is a breakfast and after school club on the school site and this was inspected separately.

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 where every adult works tirelessly to ensure that pupils achieve their very best. It successfully fulfils its mission of 'inspiring, educating, developing'. The school knows well its strengths and areas for development and, as a result, successfully helps pupils to develop good personal skills and make good progress throughout the school.

Throughout the school, while standards have fluctuated in both key stages, school tracking information and inspection evidence shows that pupils make good progress and achieve well. Children enter the EYFS with skills and knowledge that are well below those typical for their age. Good teaching in a well planned, stimulating, child-centred setting gets progress off to a good start. Children enter Year 1 having gained many skills, although they still have some ground to make up in their learning. Good quality teaching and learning, backed by well focused action by the school's leadership, ensure that pupils continue to make good progress in Key Stages 1 and 2. Focused support for pupils who find school challenging is having a positive impact on their learning. Standards in Key Stage 1 steadily increased for three years to broadly average in 2007 although they fell back in 2008. The provisional test results in 2008 for Key Stage 2 indicate a substantial rise in standards, particularly in English and mathematics. Science results dipped from the previous year because pupils do not have enough opportunities to develop or apply their scientific knowledge through practical tasks.

Relationships within the school are strong and most pupils' behaviour is commendable. The small minority of pupils who struggle with their behaviour are supported effectively through the well established support systems. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, including those with autistic spectrum disorders, are welcomed with open arms into this inclusive school and they make good progress alongside their peers. Attendance is satisfactory and the number of pupils who are persistently absent is very low. Pupils enjoy school and feel safe. They say that adults will always listen to their concerns whether social, emotional or academic. They have a very clear understanding of what bullying means and are confident that any form of abuse is dealt with swiftly. Pupils develop mature attitudes to diet, exercise and the issues surrounding substance abuse. By the time they leave the school they are self-assured young people, confident about moving on to the next stage of their education.

Teachers plan lessons very well and generally provide pupils work that meets their needs and challenges their thinking skills. All pupils have a keen understanding of their targets, and teachers' marking helps pupils to know how well they are doing and how to improve their work. There are some strong elements developing in the curriculum, such as the topics and themed weeks, for example the successful Home Front Week that embraced the local community, which make links between subjects that extend pupils' skills, knowledge and understanding. However, in classes where pupils can spend two years, the curriculum organisation means that older pupils sometimes repeat the same learning in the core subjects, which limits their progress. Also, whilst there is an appropriate emphasis on literacy and numeracy, there are, at present, limited opportunities for pupils to apply or extend their writing skills across different subjects. The curriculum overall is satisfactory.

The continual drive for school improvement is always on the headteacher's agenda and, with the able support of the deputy headteacher, a cohesive staff team and perceptive governance, the school is successfully moving forward. All members of the school community have taken an active role in the appraisal of its strengths and areas for development, resulting in a

comprehensive plan for future action. This, coupled with a clear focus on raising standards and the improvements made in pupils' progress, demonstrates that the school has a good capacity to improve.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

When they first join the EYFS, the majority of children have skills well below those expected, especially in language and communication, and their social interaction. The family-friendly induction procedures and wealth of enticing activities ensure that, from the first moment, children feel happy and secure. Staff have a keen understanding of early years' education and the setting fully reflects the ethos of child-centred learning and development. The manager is not afraid to 'think outside the box' and take risks to provide exciting and engaging experiences, indoors and outdoors that motivate all the children, including the most reluctant learners. As a result, the children have fun and do well in their learning. Planning, though not yet reflecting the recently introduced long-term requirements, is focused on children's different needs and interests. Assessment of children's progress is firmly rooted in observations, and this valuable information guides the next steps for the provision. When the children leave the EYFS at the end of Reception, they have made good progress even though their skills are mostly below those expected for their age. The manager organises transition very well, ensuring a seamless move into Year 1. The setting meets the new legal welfare requirements for the EYFS. Comments such as 'My child has made huge strides in his progress,' and, 'Teaching is excellent and the care the children receive is reassuring for parents,' typify the parents' appreciation of the setting.

What the school should do to improve further

- Provide more hands-on experiments in science that allow pupils to apply their skills in investigating and recording, and raise standards.
- Revise the curriculum for the core subjects in mixed-age classes so that objectives and learning activities are not repeated each year.
- Provide more opportunities for developing and applying pupils' writing skills across the curriculum.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils enter Year 1 with skills below expectations and make good progress throughout the school. Test results at the end of Year 2 rose steadily between 2004 and 2007 to broadly in line with the national average. They fell back slightly in 2008 because of the lower starting points of a high proportion of pupils in the cohort. Assessment and tracking data show that the school's swift response to the 2008 results, including focused intervention for current Year 2 pupils and additional support for those now in Year 3, is having a positive effect. Pupils are making good progress and working at levels closer to the national average.

Standards at the end of Key Stage 2 have varied from year to year. Provisional test outcomes for 2008 and school data show significant improvements over 2007. In 2008, in English and mathematics, overall levels of attainment were broadly in line with expectations for pupils' age but in science were below largely due to pupils' lack of practical experiences. The number of pupils attaining higher levels in mathematics exceeded both the school's and national expectations, representing significant progress for these pupils. A culture of focused target

setting and teaching, alongside additional support and intervention, has resulted in accelerated progress for pupils. Current pupils across Key Stage 2, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, are making good progress.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils really enjoy school and are very proud of their achievements. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Attendance is generally in line with national averages but is lower this term due to illness. Most pupils behave well in and around school. The small minority of pupils who require behaviour support respond well to the school's consistently applied approach. Pupils clearly understand the benefits of adopting a healthy lifestyle. The 'wake-up, shake-up' sessions are proving popular and help prepare pupils for the day ahead. Pupils have a good awareness of safe practices and the dangers of substance abuse. Even the very youngest pupils say they feel safe in school and appreciate events such as Anti-Bullying Week. They can name an adult to whom they would turn if they felt uneasy and have a mature understanding of what exactly bullying is. They are aware of cyber-bullying and the dangers associated with the Internet. The school council organises fundraising events for charities at home and abroad. Its members are especially proud of the herd of goats they bought for a village in Bangladesh. The School prepares pupils for their future economic well-being through good teaching of the basic skills. However, there are insufficient opportunities for links with business and industry through which pupils could learn more about skills in the workplace.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Secure relationships generate positive attitudes to learning across the school. Teachers plan lessons well, with a clear focus on what pupils need to learn. The best teaching is characterised by good classroom organization, effective management of pupils' behaviour, secure knowledge of what pupils can do and what they need to do next, well-paced teaching and stimulating and interesting activities. These are all carefully matched to most pupils' needs and teachers use focused questioning well to probe and extend pupils' understanding. Teachers work hard to engage and sustain pupils' interest. Pupils are keen to learn and are excited by activities that provide hands-on, practical experiences. In science, however, teachers often play safe and use worksheets that restrict opportunities for writing across the curriculum and limit pupils' experiences of active investigation. Teachers focus their planning and assessment on setting progressive targets that all pupils, even the very youngest, are able to identify. Marking is mostly helpful and supportive, clearly pointing out what has been done well and what needs to be done better. The valuable work of the teaching assistants is greatly appreciated by teachers and pupils, especially those pupils who find learning difficult. This extra help ensures that pupils make the most of their lessons and progress equally well.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum is successful in meeting the needs of most pupils and very successful in promoting their personal development. The school places an appropriate emphasis on developing pupils' basic skills in literacy, numeracy, and information and communication technology. However,

curriculum organisation in the mixed-age classes sometimes leads to pupils repeating work that they have done before. Pupils in Key Stage 2 learn French and have the opportunity to play a musical instrument, adding effectively to their cultural development and to the international dimension of their learning. Within this enriched curriculum, however, there are currently limited opportunities for pupils to extend their writing across other subjects or to carry out and independently record hands-on investigative experiments in science. Pupils clearly enjoy the developing creative curriculum and speak enthusiastically about learning through themed weeks that make learning real and fire their imaginations. Personal, social and emotional development is a strength of the curriculum and particularly supports the needs of vulnerable groups, especially those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, including autistic spectrum disorder. The good range of extra-curricular activities that extends pupils' interests and talents has been rewarded through the many external awards received by the school.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Inclusion is at the forefront of the school's mission and a strength of its provision. All adults know pupils well and are committed to providing high levels of care. They respond sensitively to the particular needs of those with more profound challenges. Procedures for safeguarding pupils are in place and risk assessments are robust. Well established and utilised systems track pupils' academic progress through the school. Pupils know their own targets and through these many have a clear understanding of what level they are at and where they need to move to next. 'Teachers write down what you need to do to achieve the next level,' was a typical pupil comment. The majority of parents are supportive of the school. 'Staff are all very approachable and have a caring attitude to all the children,' typifies the views of many parents. However, a significant minority understandably expressed concerns over pupils' learning in mixed-age classes, making comments such as, 'It appears that literacy and numeracy objectives may have been repeated.'

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

A relentless drive for improvement, spearheaded by the headteacher, has been the motivating force behind the school's recent success in raising standards and assuring good progress. The culture of continual monitoring, evaluating and taking action to secure improvements is shared by staff at all levels. Expectations are high, and challenging target setting and tracking of pupils' progress have contributed to the improvements that the school now celebrates. All adults are involved in, and contribute to, self-evaluation and know the school well. Their contributions feed into the school improvement plan that is firmly rooted in raising standards and achievement. There is a particularly successful system of devolved leadership within the school whereby all teachers are fully aware of school priorities, responsible for actioning them and accountable to governors for their success. Community cohesion is good. The school works hard to embrace the local community and forges effective and supportive links beyond the immediate area that are beginning to enhance and develop pupils' awareness of their place in society. Governance is strong with high expectations for pupils' futures and equality of opportunity challenging the school to provide and generate the very best possible outcomes for all.

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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?	2
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	2
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?	2
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	2
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	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/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	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
The extent to which 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

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?	3
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**

Thank you for the warm welcome you gave me and my colleague when we visited to inspect your school. We enjoyed talking with you and listening to what you had to say. We agree with you when you say yours is a good school. We know many of your parents and carers agree with this too.

These are the main things we found out when we inspected the school.

- You and your teachers have worked hard to make sure that by Year 6 you attain standards in English and mathematics that are similar with those that are found in most schools. This means you are adequately prepared for your next school.
- You are taught well and your teachers work hard to make sure that your lessons are interesting and that you make good progress.
- It is good to know you are very happy with the way all the adults look after you and care for you, and we agree that they do this very well.
- We were really moved to see how much you cared for those pupils who find learning and coping difficult.
- We were very impressed by the way you could advise us about eating healthily and the real meaning of bullying – STOP (Several Times On Purpose).
- You behave well and your parents and carers should be very proud of the way you are so polite and welcoming to visitors.
- Your headteacher and deputy headteacher lead the school very well and the staff and governors work well together in a strong team.

To help your school stay as good and successful as it is we have asked your headteacher, teachers and governors to do the following.

- Make sure that your science lessons are exciting with lots of practical experiments that will help you to reach higher standards.
- Think carefully about how they can organise your lessons in the mixed-age classes so that you are not doing some activities that were covered in the previous year.
- Make sure that your teachers find interesting ways of encouraging you to write in many different ways in many different subjects.

You too can help by continuing to be the best that you can be!

Thank you once again for being so kind and friendly - we really enjoyed seeing you at work and play!