

The Rackham Church of England Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	110807
Local Authority	Cambridgeshire
Inspection number	325225
Inspection date	29 April 2009
Reporting inspector	Roger Brown

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 controlled
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	316
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	Mrs Sandra Thompson
Headteacher	Mr Sid Wales
Date of previous school inspection	10 May 2006
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Main Street Witchford Ely Cambridgeshire CB6 2HQ

Age group	4–11
Inspection date	29 April 2009
Inspection number	325225

Telephone number
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors.

Inspectors evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues:

- the quality of teaching and learning
- the effectiveness and impact of the curriculum on pupils' learning
- the quality of the care, guidance and support pupils receive.

Inspectors gathered evidence from:

- lesson observations
- scrutiny of pupils' work, teachers' planning and records
- discussions with pupils, a governor, the headteacher and staff
- scrutiny of school policies and documentation
- an analysis of parents' responses to the inspection questionnaire.

Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but inspectors found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given its self-evaluation, were not justified, and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

Description of the school

The school serves the village of Witchford and the surrounding area. It is larger than the average primary school. Almost one third of the pupils come from outside the school's catchment area. Children join the Early Years Foundation Stage in the September following their fourth birthday. Almost all pupils are from White British backgrounds, although there are small numbers from the Traveller community and a range of other backgrounds. A small number speak English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below average, as is the proportion of pupils with a statement of special educational needs. A smaller-than-average proportion are entitled to free school meals.

The school holds the Activemark Gold, Health Promoting Schools and Basic Skills awards. It also holds Investors in People status and has the Football Association Charter Mark and Partners in Learning.

There is onsite childcare provision in the form of a daily pre-school club that is managed by an independent provider.

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 pupils are happy, motivated to learn and keen to work. Some aspects of the school's work, particularly in relation to pupils' personal development and well-being, and the care guidance and support they receive are outstanding. Pupils' behaviour in class and around school is excellent; they are polite, thoughtful and considerate. The quality of relationships between all members of the school community is outstanding. Pupils apply themselves diligently to their work and most play an active role in the life of the school. There is a strong commitment to giving the pupils many opportunities to participate in a wide range of sports. The staff place a strong focus on fostering and nurturing pupils, giving them a wide range of experiences. This ranges from the opportunity to take part in regular drama productions to excellent opportunities for extra-curricular events through trips and clubs. As a result, pupils thrive and are well prepared for the next stage of their education.

Pupils' achievements are good. When they start in the Early Years Foundation Stage, children's skills and experiences are broadly similar to those expected for their age. They make good progress overall, with most exceeding the early learning goals by the end of their Reception Year. Pupils maintain this impetus in Key Stage 1, reaching standards in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of Year 2 that are consistently above those expected. The good progress continues in Key Stage 2, standards continue to rise so that at the end of Year 6, pupils' overall attainment in the end of year assessments is higher than that found nationally. Pupils with learning difficulties make good progress in relation to their starting points. This is because of the good quality support they receive in addressing their individual needs. No group of pupils is disadvantaged because the staff take great care to monitor and track the progress that all pupils make. Several parents whose children fall into minority categories wrote to praise the staff for the successful integration of their children into the life of the school. They are particularly pleased by the success they achieve.

Teaching and learning are good. The consistently good quality of the teaching really engages the pupils in their learning. Staff make skilled use of questioning to draw out pupils' previous knowledge and understanding, and help them adapt and extend their skills in new situations. The classrooms are attractively set out with good access to a range of resources. The teachers and teaching assistants are very positive, which gives pupils the confidence to ask questions and share their ideas. Most lessons are conducted at a brisk pace, with pupils fully aware from the start of what it is they are going to learn. However, just occasionally, teachers' explanations and the subsequent question and answer sessions are too long and this reduces the time for pupils to carry out their individual tasks. Pupils' work is marked regularly, and pupils are becoming skilful at assessing their own understanding of how well they are achieving. A simple, but effective, system of 'stars and a wish' is used consistently by teachers to praise pupils' achievement and guide them in their next steps. Procedures for checking and tracking pupils' progress are developing and evolving as the staff are starting to make use of the national 'Assessing Pupil Progress' guidance and materials. Staff recognise that this has the potential to allow them to plan strategic interventions at an individual and group level in order to raise pupils' attainment to even higher levels.

The curriculum and the associated activities meet pupils' needs and interests well and are evolving as a strength of the school. Staff are constantly assessing what they teach and adapting it to match pupils' interests. At the same time they, and the governors, monitor the skills that are taught to ensure that there is a full coverage of all areas. Pupils say that they really like

this way of learning and appreciate the fact that their teachers not only ask what it is they want to learn, but make lessons more interesting by integrating aspects of different subjects together. Pupils particularly enjoy using the improving provision for information and communication technology (ICT) to research and solve problems. They say they would like even more opportunities to use ICT and the staff have made plans and committed resources to make this happen.

Pupils' excellent personal development and well-being have been sustained since the last inspection. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent and this is reflected in their attitudes and actions. Staff have worked hard to improve and extend pupils' cultural understanding. The school's new community cohesion policy is designed to build on the existing good practice in the school. Staff are actively seeking to expand pupils' horizons by exploring international connections. Pupils have an excellent understanding of how to keep safe and say they have no hesitation in turning to an adult for help. They are proud of their involvement in decision-making and organising fund-raising for charities. The school council is well established and actively engaged in developing aspects of the school. All of the parents who completed the inspection questionnaire were positive about the way staff consult pupils. Many pupils are actively involved in the local community and most take part in many sporting events with other schools in the area, often with a lot of success. Pupils continue to have an excellent understanding of keeping healthy and the importance of eating a balanced diet. The level of attendance has improved thanks to the work of staff and is now good, although a very small number of pupils still have a high level of persistent absence.

The pastoral care of pupils is excellent and sustained through a strong commitment to the teaching and development of personal, social and health education. Staff are regularly trained and updated on child protection procedures, and arrangements for safeguarding pupils meet current requirements. The strong and effective academic guidance already ensures good levels of pupil progress, and teachers are committed to utilising the newest national assessment and tracking materials to enhance this.

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher provides a clear direction for the work of the school. The staff team work very well together, with individual roles and responsibilities clearly defined and understood by all. The quality of the school's self-evaluation is good, with evidence identified that links the provision that is made with an assessment of the impact. Targets are challenging, ensuring staff are focused on maintaining and further improving pupils' standards and progress. The governing body holds the school to account, challenging and questioning the impact of decisions on pupils' achievement. Links with outside agencies and other schools are good. The staff have dealt effectively with the issues for development identified at the last inspection and the current priorities for development are accurate. Therefore, the school has a good capacity for further improvement.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

The school's Early Years Foundation Stage gives children a good start to their full-time education. Many of the children attend the pre-school club that operates on the school site and there are good links with this group. When they join the Reception class, children's skills and experiences are broadly similar to those expected for their age. The children quickly settle into daily routines and make good progress in this calm and purposeful setting. The care and guidance they receive are outstanding, ensuring excellent relationships between children and between children and adults. Good planning provides children with a wide range of activities which span the areas

of learning. There is a good balance between activities that are adult led, those which are chosen by the children and whole-class activities. Learning resources are of high quality and readily available. Good use is made of the outside area. The staff team work well together. They have a good understanding of children's individual needs and a clear understanding of the Early Years Foundation Stage curriculum. Staff assess and record children's attainment and progress carefully. This has highlighted a growing gap between the attainment of boys and that of girls. The boys are falling behind in the areas of language development and in the understanding of shape, space and measures in mathematics. Nevertheless, children do make good progress. By the time they leave this stage they are achieving standards that are better than those expected nationally. The good teamwork and effective teaching give good support to the leadership whose overall impact is good.

What the school should do to improve further

- Expand the use of the national 'Assessing Pupil Progress' materials in order to raise pupils' attainment to even higher levels.
- Use assessment information to close the gap between the attainment of boys and girls in the Reception classes.

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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?	1
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	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?	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
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	2
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 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

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

30 April 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Rackham Church of England Primary School, Ely, CB6 2HQ

Thank you very much for making us so welcome when we visited your school. We really enjoyed talking to you about your work and everything that goes on in school. We think your behaviour is excellent and we are very impressed by your confidence in asking questions and joining in discussions. We could see that you care well for each other and respect what other people say. These strengths prepare you well for when you move on to your next schools.

We think that you go to a good school. We could see that you quickly got down to your tasks in lessons and the work you were doing was of high quality. We were impressed by the way your teachers listen to your opinions and work hard to take account of your interests when planning the work that you do. When we looked at your books and work, we could see that the staff have a good understanding of what you need to do next to improve your work. We liked the way they used the system of stars and wishes to praise your achievements and guide you in developing what you need to do next. This is one of the ways that they help you to make good progress and achieve high standards. However, we would like your teachers to continue to work to refine the new system of 'Assessing Pupil Progress', as we think that this will allow your teachers to help you make even better progress.

We would also like the staff in the Early Years Foundation Stage to use the knowledge they have gathered about the children to close the gap between the achievements of the boys and that of the girls. At the moment, the girls in the Reception classes do better than the boys in some aspects of language and mathematics.

Our best wishes for your future.

Yours sincerely

Roger Brown

Lead inspector