

# William Ransom Primary School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	117314
<b>Local Authority</b>	Hertfordshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	326571
<b>Inspection date</b>	3 June 2009
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Ian Jones

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.

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<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School (total)	271
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
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mrs Sara Cranfield
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs Mary Driver
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	14 June 2006
<b>Date of previous funded early education inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
<b>Date of previous childcare inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
<b>School address</b>	Stuart Drive Hitchin Hertfordshire SG4 9QB
<b>Telephone number</b>	01462 624777
<b>Fax number</b>	01462 624888

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<b>Age group</b>	4–11
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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors.

The inspection evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues:

- the extent to which the wider curriculum matches learners' needs, builds on their prior attainment and promotes enjoyment and achievement
- how effectively pupils are involved in setting their own targets and making decisions about their own learning
- how well leaders and managers monitor and evaluate the work of the school

Evidence was gathered from observing lessons, scrutinising school documentation and pupils' work, analysing parents' questionnaire responses, evaluating records of pupils' achievement and progress, and discussions with the headteacher, staff, governors and pupils.

Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in as much detail, but the inspection 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 the report.

## Description of the school

This is a larger-than-average primary school serving a residential area of Hitchin. Most pupils are from White British backgrounds. The proportion from minority ethnic groups is similar to that found in schools nationally. The proportion of pupils at an early stage of learning English is rising, but remains below the national average. Children join the Early Years Foundation Stage at two points in the school year in the Reception class. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, including those with a statement of special educational needs, is below average. The school holds a number of awards including School Achievement, Basic Skills, Sports Active Mark and the Healthy Schools Award.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 1

This is an outstanding school. It provides an excellent education, enabling all pupils to make exceptionally good progress in their learning. This is due to high-quality and outstanding teaching, a stimulating curriculum and excellent, well-focused leadership. An overwhelming majority of the parents are very happy with the school. Typical of many comments was, 'The school has allowed my child to learn and develop in a way in which she will benefit throughout her life.' Another parent, echoing the views of many, said, 'William Ransom is a friendly and supportive school. It produces well rounded, polite children with a love of learning.'

When children start at the school, their attainment is above average. By the end of the Reception Year, they reach standards that are well above those expected. This outstanding progress continues throughout the school and by the time pupils leave at the end of Year 6 they reach exceptionally high standards. For example, in the 2008 statutory tests and assessments, three quarters of pupils attained the higher levels in English and mathematics. Standards in writing are particularly high because pupils receive challenging and stimulating opportunities to write for specific purposes. Pupils are highly motivated and willing learners. They demonstrate extremely mature attitudes to their work, and are eager participants in the learning partnership carefully fostered by the excellent teaching.

Pupils who find learning difficult or who have emotional or behavioural needs make excellent progress due to the high quality support they receive. The school demonstrates considerable expertise in this area, identifying pupils at risk of falling behind at an early stage through the excellent tracking systems and providing very effective support as required. The adults who specifically work with these pupils help them make outstanding gains in their learning, supported by the close links with parents. One wrote, 'The school has been happy to work together constructively to deal effectively with my child's difficulties'. The staff also make good efforts to challenge the most able pupils, through work in lessons and special events such as interesting projects with similar pupils from other schools. There are no significant differences in achievement between boys and girls or any groups of pupils.

Pupils are excellently looked after and cared for. Safeguarding requirements are met and child protection procedures are robust. Pupils say they are well cared for and they have adults they would trust to talk to if they had concerns or worries. Attendance is excellent: pupils thoroughly enjoy school and the many opportunities offered. In addition, the school provides excellent academic guidance and support through effective feedback. This helps pupils understand what they need to do to improve and helps ensure that they are effective partners in the learning process. Older pupils learn to assess their own work and this helps them appreciate the need for the improvements suggested. Teachers' marking often results in clear interventions, and they can then highlight in later work where improvement has occurred. Target setting is challenging and as pupils get older, they develop a good awareness of the level at which they are working.

The outstanding care, guidance and support results in excellent personal development. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. They show a great enjoyment of all aspects of school life, talking enthusiastically about their teachers, the lessons, the many after-school clubs and the frequent opportunities they have to take responsibility. Through the school and class councils, monitors and other roles, older pupils have excellent opportunities to have their voice heard and to make a real difference to school life. In one recent excellent

example of them contributing to the school community, older pupils were interviewed for peer mediation training which they were receiving during the inspection. Pupils take these opportunities very seriously. They demonstrate an excellent understanding of how to lead healthy lives and keep themselves safe. Their behaviour is exemplary in and out of lessons. Regular and effective liaison with secondary schools, pupils' mature attitudes and eagerness to learn and their exceptionally high level of academic and personal skills all contribute significantly to the outstanding preparation for the next stage in their education.

The consistently high level of teaching and learning and the excellent curriculum combine to produce outstanding achievement across the school. Teaching benefits from excellent subject knowledge, complemented by a range of teaching styles and the highest expectations of pupils to ensure excellent progress. Teachers collaborate very effectively, taking advantage of numerous opportunities to work together and spread good practice. The curriculum is carefully designed to ensure that activities meet all learners' aspirations and capabilities. Pupils enjoy a breadth of practical activities and experiences that foster a love of learning. A thematic approach to the curriculum supports pupils' skill development across different subjects. During the inspection for example, pupils used information and communication technology and research skills in composing letters arguing for the installation of speed cameras on a local main road. Improvements to the curriculum such as the introduction of philosophy lessons is teaching pupils to consider alternative views and helping them to collaborate on tasks using team-building skills. Teachers have excellent relationships with the pupils and this encourages their outstanding attitudes to learning.

The continued success of the school is due to outstanding leadership and management. The headteacher provides the school with clearly focused leadership, and she is well supported by the senior leadership team. The monitoring and evaluation of the school's work is undertaken positively and rigorously and with the clear intention of improving performance. Strong and effective leadership, which is challenging but supportive of the staff, results in mutual respect and a willingness by all to work together to provide the best possible for the pupils. The school shows no signs of complacency and has a genuine desire to seek further innovative ideas and sustain continuous improvement. The accurate self-evaluation and the well-focused plans for the future, indicate that the school has an outstanding capacity to improve. This is supported by the work of the governing body. They have an excellent understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses, and make shrewd use of their expertise to govern very effectively. The school has a developing understanding of what is required to promote community cohesion and has appropriate plans to extend this work. Although there are a range of examples of how community cohesion is promoted, the school's plans do not systematically ensure that all pupils gain a thorough understanding of how others, nationally and globally, live and lead their lives.

## **Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage**

### **Grade: 1**

Children get off to an excellent start in Reception and most make exemplary progress from starting points that are above average in most areas of learning. Their attainment when they leave Reception is well above that found nationally. Children's personal development is excellent and contributes to their rapid progress and social skills. All children work and play harmoniously. The excellent provision made for their welfare means that they settle into school quickly and happily, have very positive relationships with staff, and enjoy learning. The staff get to know children well and understand their learning and social needs. There are very good procedures to support children entering Reception and then moving into Year 1.

Teaching is outstanding. Adults are skilled in helping children to develop their knowledge and understanding when they work with them in groups, for example the children using the programmable toys to learn the sequence of numbers. Staff provide a range of exciting things for children to do which engage their interest and enthusiasm. There is a good balance between activities directed by the staff, and those that children choose for themselves. The early introduction of strategies to link sounds and letters prepares them well in learning how to read and write. The provision for children to learn outdoors is good. Outdoor learning is often planned as an extension and consolidation to the learning taking place indoors. Children are able to move freely between indoor and outdoor play. The exposure to enrichment of this kind is limited for the few children in the mixed-age group.

The Early Years Foundation Stage is excellently led and managed. Assessment of children's progress is carried out methodically and provides a good overview of their development. Parents are very pleased with the provision and give it their overwhelming support.

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

- Enhance community cohesion by developing pupils' understanding of how others live through a greater focus on national and global issues.

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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?	1
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?	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1

**Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage**

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	1
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	1
How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	1
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	1
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	1
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	1

**Achievement and standards**

How well do learners achieve?	1
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	1
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	1
How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress	1

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<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.



## Personal development and well-being

<b>How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	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	1
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	1

## The quality of provision

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?</b>	1
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1

## Leadership and management

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	1
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1
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

4 June 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of William Ransom Primary School, Hitchin, SG4 9QB

Thank you for making Mrs Arora and me so welcome, talking to us and helping us during your school's recent inspection. It was very enjoyable meeting you and finding out all about your school. You will be pleased to know that the school is doing an outstanding job - well done everyone!

Here are some of the most important parts of the inspection report that I thought you might like to know about.

- You work hard in lessons and your achievement is excellent. This helps you to reach exceptionally high standards.
- Your personal development is outstanding. You clearly enjoy your time in school and I was very impressed by your excellent behaviour.

You have excellent work planned for you and your teachers work hard to make it all as exciting and interesting as possible.

You told me that your teachers and teaching assistants are doing a great job and are lots of fun - I agree with you. You are lucky to have such talented people Your headteacher does a tremendous job of helping everyone work together to make the school as good as it is.

To improve further the school should help you to develop your understanding of United Kingdom and global communities. You can help by continuing to try hard and enjoying your time at school.

Thank you again for being so helpful and polite.

Ian Jones

Lead inspector