

# Rathmell Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School

## Inspection report

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Unique Reference Number	121633
Local Authority	North Yorkshire
Inspection number	327534
Inspection dates	9–10 February 2009
Reporting inspector	Christine Harrison

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 under pilot arrangements; it was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

The registered childcare, managed by the governing body, was inspected under section 49 of the Childcare Act 2006.

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Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary Aided
Age range of pupils	4–10
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	48
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage	0
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs T Snowden
Headteacher	Mrs C Boxall
Date of previous school inspection	March 2006
School address	Hesley Lane Rathmell Settle North Yorkshire BD24 0LA
Telephone number	01729 840360
Fax number	NA
Email address	admin@Rathmell.n-yorks.sch.uk

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## Introduction

This pilot inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector. The inspector visited 10 lessons, and held meetings with the headteacher, chair of governors, teachers and a group of pupils. She observed the school's work, and looked at the school development plan, the school's current assessment records and its records of self-evaluation. A total of 28 parental questionnaires were also scrutinised.

The inspector reviewed many aspects of the school's work. She looked in detail at the following:

- pupils' recent achievement and the school's records of their current progress, particularly in writing and mathematics
- how effectively teachers meet the needs of all groups of pupils within the mixed-age classes
- the Early Years Foundation Stage.

## Information about the school

This very small school serves the village of Rathmell and the surrounding rural area, which is relatively advantaged. Pupils have a range of backgrounds and the proportion of pupils who are eligible for free school meals is below average. Almost all pupils come from White British backgrounds and all speak English as their first language. The proportion of pupils who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities is average.

Pupils are taught in two mixed-age classes. One class provides for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage and Years 1 and 2; the other for Years 3, 4 and 5. For children in the Early Years Foundation Stage, the provision consists of a Reception group and a part-time Pre-Reception group. Pupils leave the school at the end of Year 5.

The school is an extended school and offers support and learning facilities for families in the local community. The school holds several awards, including Healthy Schools status, the Basic Skills award and Activemark. It has recently been identified as a Leading School for Inclusion by the local authority.

## Inspection judgements

Grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Overall effectiveness

2

Capacity for sustained improvement

2

## Main findings

This is a good school with several outstanding features. It provides exemplary care and support for all pupils and their families. As one parent, reflecting the views of many, said: 'It is a very friendly, welcoming and caring school.' Every pupil is fully involved in making a contribution to the life of the school community and each has their own individual responsibilities which they carry out carefully and cheerfully. Pupils flourish within this happy and mutually supportive environment; every one of them has an equal opportunity to do well and their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. Pupils have an excellent understanding of the importance of a healthy lifestyle. Extremely effective links with many outside agencies ensure that pupils, particularly those who are vulnerable, receive any specialist support that they need.

The quality of teaching and learning is good overall so that pupils make good progress overall as they move through the school and reach standards that are above average by the time they leave in Year 5. The teaching of literacy skills is a particular strength but the teaching of numeracy, although satisfactory, is not yet as successful as it might be. For many pupils, mathematics is their least favourite subject and their achievement is satisfactory.

Children get off to a good start in the Early Years Foundation Stage but children's satisfactory progress in the use of numbers, linking sounds to letters and writing is not as good as it is in other aspects of their development. The school is aware that the outside space does not provide a stimulating environment for learning.

The school has good capacity for further improvement because self-evaluation is accurate and weaknesses are identified and tackled enthusiastically. Development planning has improved significantly since the last inspection and has recently been used to underpin the successful work to raise the standards of pupils' writing.

## What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve pupils' achievement in mathematics by:
  - embedding the use of numbers more securely in the Early Years

### Foundation Stage

- increasing the opportunities to develop skills in mental mathematics
  - ensuring that the work provided for each group is suitably challenging so that learning is consistently good
  - making teaching more engaging and exciting so that pupils' confidence in, and enjoyment of, mathematics is increased.
- Enhance the provision for the Early Years Foundation Stage by:
- increasing the emphasis on linking sounds and letters and writing to give pupils an even better starting point for Year 1
  - improving the outdoor space so that it can be used more effectively to extend pupils' learning.

## How good is the overall outcome for individuals and groups of pupils?

2
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Pupils learn well in the majority of lessons throughout the school; they are well motivated, work hard and enjoy what they do. They respond very well to the school's efforts to extend their experience. For example, they talk enthusiastically of the visit of a writer and can recall the details of their efforts to produce 'a play in a day'. In the past, pupils' writing has been an area where they have been less successful. However, lesson observations show that pupils are now writing at greater length and with a stronger sense of urgency, while maintaining both quality and presentation.

Children arrive in Reception with skills that generally match those expected for their age. As a result of their good progress through the school, pupils achieve well and reach standards, by the end of Year 5, that are above average overall and in English and science. Progress in mathematics is satisfactory rather than good because the teaching of numeracy is not as consistently good as in other subjects. Pupils' skills in mental mathematics and problem solving are not as strong as, for example, their literacy skills. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities receive very effective support and are enabled to make similar progress to that of other pupils in the class. More able pupils often benefit from being able to work with older pupils in small groups within the mixed-age classes.

Pupils behave well, both in lessons and around the school, and treat each other with kindness and respect. For example, older pupils look after younger ones if they fall over in the playground and help them in the search when things get lost. Pupils' attendance and punctuality are very good. The school's Healthy Schools status and Activemark award indicate pupils' strong commitment to healthy living. All pupils eat the excellent school lunches and they show impressive enthusiasm for sporting and outdoor activities. They say how much they enjoy taking responsibility for planning their own fundraising events for various charities, thus developing organisational skills that will be useful in the future.

*These are the grades for pupils' outcomes*

Pupils' attainment <sup>1</sup>	2
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and their progress	2
How well do pupils achieve and enjoy their learning?	2
To what extent do pupils feel safe?	2
How well do pupils behave?	2
To what extent do pupils adopt healthy lifestyles?	1
To what extent do pupils contribute to the school and wider community?	1
Pupils' attendance	2
How well do pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being?	2
What is the extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development?	1

## The quality of the school's work

Teachers have very good relationships with pupils and maintain a good atmosphere for learning throughout the school. They are enthusiastic and encouraging and give instructions clearly so that pupils know what they are expected to learn. In most lessons, particularly in literacy, teachers plan carefully to provide activities that meet the needs of the various groups of pupils.

The teaching of reading is particularly effective, with learning support assistants playing an important role in working with groups so that everybody gets a chance to practise reading aloud and to enjoy books that really interest them. Within mathematics lessons, some groups make good progress but others do not, sometimes because activities are not sufficiently demanding. In a group making better progress, one pupil said 'This is hard but it's good', indicating the importance of sufficient challenge. Other pupils say that some numeracy work is too difficult and some is too easy, confirming that teachers do not always pitch work at the correct level.

Pupils' progress is regularly assessed and tracked so that any difficulties can be quickly identified and action taken to overcome problems. The school is aware that this has not been as successful as it might have been in mathematics and is now identifying more precisely the aspects that pupils find difficult.

In addition to the strong emphasis on literacy and numeracy, the curriculum also includes interesting whole-school themes, including such varied topics as 'The same but different', 'Think global' and 'Keep fit; stay fit'. Science topics are included within the themes and pupils' good achievement in science confirms that the strategy is successful. A very wide range of extra-curricular activities, including plenty of sporting activities within the local cluster of schools, is much appreciated by pupils

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<sup>1</sup> Grades for attainment are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; 4 is low

and their parents and participation rates are high.

Teachers and support assistants know each individual pupil, and their families, extremely well. A typical parental comment is, 'The school is incredibly quick to identify any issues that might become problematic.' The school then takes action to provide whatever care or extra help is needed. This is particularly evident in the excellent support provided for pupils with complex needs, enabling those pupils to enjoy their learning and make good progress.

*These are the grades for the quality of provision*

High quality teaching and purposeful learning	2
Effective assessment	2
An appropriate curriculum which meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, provision through partnership with other organisations	2
Support, guidance and care	1

## How effective are leadership and management?

The leadership and management of the school are good. The headteacher and all her staff are fully committed to making improvements and raising pupils' achievement. The school has good procedures for safeguarding pupils and these meet current requirements. Governors take an active part in monitoring the work of the school and are well informed about its strengths and weaknesses. The school has worked hard in its efforts to improve aspects of mathematics but some strategies have not proved as successful as expected. New, improved plans have been put in place though there has not yet been time for them to be fully effective.

The school's status within the local authority as a 'leading school for inclusion' is very well deserved. The school's knowledge of, and support for, each individual pupil is impressive and every effort is made to ensure that all have the best possible opportunities.

The school takes care to ensure that pupils are well prepared for the next stage of education and the world beyond the area in which they live. Excellent partnerships with the local cluster schools and the middle school ensure that pupils become accustomed to working within a larger community. The school makes a good contribution to community cohesion. Pupils contribute well to activities in the locality, including laying paths and planting bulbs. They speak very enthusiastically of their links with a school in Bradford and of all that they have learnt from their visits to the city and, in particular, the beautiful new mosque. The school has recently become an 'integrated services rural access point', with a parent support adviser based in the school. However, these arrangements, together with the extended school status, are very new and have yet to have a significant impact.

*These are the grades for leadership and management*

Communicating ambition and driving improvement	2
Promoting equality of opportunity and tackling discrimination	1
Ensuring that safeguarding procedures are effective	2
Ensuring that the governing body provides effective challenge and support so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities are met	2
Promoting the school's relationship with parents and carers, including their involvement in decision-making about matters relating to learning and well-being	2
Developing partnerships with other providers, organisations and services	1
Ensuring the school contributes to community cohesion	2
Deploying resources to achieve value for money	2

## Early Years Foundation Stage

Children are well cared for in Reception and pre-Reception, and are very happy in school. Their full inclusion in all the activities of the school makes a very positive contribution to their personal development. The teacher and learning support assistants work hard to provide a full range of activities for children and to meet their needs. There are plenty of opportunities for imaginative and creative play. For example, a pair of cardboard petrol pumps was the inspiration for some enthusiastic role-play and children demonstrated impressive perseverance in the building of a large model speedboat.

There is a good balance of activities led by adults and those selected by the child. All adults provide good role models; they speak clearly and question children well to extend their understanding. Children get plenty of fresh air and the outside space is used for different aspects of learning but it is an uninspiring area and lacks some of the resources needed for really effective outdoor learning.

Children arrive in Reception with skills that generally match those expected for their age. However, some have not had the opportunity to make a start on early reading and writing. Children make good progress as they move through Reception and most of their skills are better than expected by the time they enter Year 1. Their personal development, physical development and knowledge and understanding of the world are particularly impressive.

The Early Years Foundation Stage is well managed and staff have worked hard to implement the new requirements for this stage. However, some aspects of the curriculum are not yet as firmly embedded as they might be. In particular, the linking of sounds to letters is under-developed, together with activities to encourage early writing skills. Therefore, children make satisfactory progress in these strands and reach the levels expected. This is in contrast to other aspects of communication, language and literacy where children's progress is good and their skills are better than expected by the end of Reception.



How good are the outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage?	2
What is the quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage?	2
How effectively is the provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage led and managed?	2
Overall effectiveness: how well does the setting/school meet the needs of children in the Early Years Foundation Stage?	2

## Views of parents and carers

Parents are overwhelmingly positive in their views of the school. Many parents used the questionnaire to say how pleased they were with the school and none of the comments expressed any concerns or suggestions for improvement. Inspection findings agree with parents' views, particularly in relation to the outstanding support, guidance and care that the school provides. Parents are especially enthusiastic about the home-school link book which does indeed provide a genuine means of communication between teachers and parents and is extremely well used.

## What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. In 2007-8, 15% of schools were judged to be outstanding.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well. In 2007-8, 49% of schools were judged good.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils. In 2007-8, 32% of schools were judged satisfactory.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves. In 2007-8, 5% of schools were judged inadequate.

## Common terminology used by inspectors

Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.
Achievement:	an overall measure of the pupils' success in their academic learning. The term combines attainment and progress. Pupils might make good progress, for example, but if their attainment remains low, inspectors may judge that their achievement is only satisfactory.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.



11 February 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Rathmell Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School,  
Settle, BD24 0LA

As you know, I visited the school this week to find out how well it is getting on. Thank you very much for making me so welcome and for making my visit so interesting and enjoyable. In particular, thank you to those of you who talked to me and told me what you thought about the school.

You will be pleased to know that I judged your school to be good, with several features that are outstanding. In particular, the care that the school provides for each one of you is excellent. The school works extremely closely with many people, including other schools, to give you very good opportunities, to prepare you for middle school and to give you any extra help you need. It was very good to see that all of you take on responsibilities in school and do your jobs cheerfully and very efficiently. You all get on very well together and develop excellent skills in dealing with different situations. Your excellent understanding of how to live a healthy life and how well you put what you know into action impressed me. Most importantly, you receive good teaching and you work hard so that you make good progress, particularly in English and science.

However, even in a good school, there are some things which could be better. The youngest children, in Reception, do need a better equipped outdoor area in which they can learn more easily. I have also asked teachers to give them more practise in using letters and numbers so that they can get off to a flying start in Year 1. Most importantly, your test results in mathematics are not as good as they are in English and science. I have asked teachers to make sure that the younger ones among you get more practise working with numbers so that you become more confident and enjoy mathematics more as you grow older. I have also asked that you are given more opportunity to develop your skills in mental mathematics and that all of you are given work that is not too easy and not too hard. I hope you will play your part and try even harder in your numeracy lessons. Numbers do become more fun as you get better at using them - honest!

I shall certainly remember my time in Rathmell School, particularly your lovely singing in assembly. I wish you all every success in the future.

Yours sincerely

Christine Harrison  
Lead inspector

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