

Rack House Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	105448
Local Authority	Manchester
Inspection number	336498
Inspection dates	1–2 October 2009
Reporting inspector	James Kidd

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 of pupils on the school roll	220
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Ken Ashberry
Headteacher	Miss Tracey Wood
Date of previous school inspection	1 September 2006
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 14 lessons and held meetings with governors, staff and groups of pupils. They observed the school's work, and looked at a range of documents, including relevant policies, attendance records and monitoring information on pupils' attainment and progress. In addition, inspectors analysed 92 questionnaires returned by parents, 17 returned by staff and 69 returned by pupils.

- the impact of the school's strategies to improve standards and achievement in Key Stage 1
- pupils' progress in mathematics across the school
- behaviour and self-discipline among pupils and the extent of their willingness to take on responsibility for the good of the school community and beyond
- the extent, rigour and accuracy of school self-evaluation to inform improvement planning
- the overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage.

Information about the school

This is a broadly average-sized school in which numbers are rising. The percentage of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is more than two and a half times the national average. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is above average. Just over a fifth of pupils are from minority ethnic groups but there are few who are new to learning English as an additional language. There have been significant changes to the leadership team since the previous inspection and there are now a new headteacher and new inclusion, Early Years Foundation Stage and mathematics leaders. Rack House Primary is an accredited Healthy School, holds the Manchester Inclusion Standard and has a partnership with a local special school.

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

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

This is a good school that has outstanding links with parents and carers and in which the care, guidance and support for the pupils in its charge are of the highest order. Pupils love their school and one spoke for many with the words, 'We like the way the adults respect us.' Indeed, pupils are most welcoming to visitors and are delighted to talk about Rack House Primary and about how proud they are of it.

Pupils get a really good start in the Early Years Foundation Stage, make good progress across the school and meet their challenging targets to reach broadly average standards by the end of Year 6. Although improving, standards in mathematics are not as high as they should be and pupils need more challenge and more opportunities to develop their problem solving skills in numeracy. Nonetheless, progress and attainment in English are consistently good.

Pupils behave well in lessons and around the school site. Playground buddies have a high profile and support their younger counterparts to the hilt. In addition, the school council makes suggestions as to how the school can improve further and eco warriors offer pupils advice on how to look after the environment. Pupils have a keen understanding of the importance of a balanced diet and of regular exercise. They are actively involved in community activities and the Steel Pans players have an enviable reputation both within school and beyond.

Teaching is good and sometimes outstanding. Relationships between pupils and between pupils and adults are a major strength and pupils enjoy learning together in pairs and in groups. The curriculum develops pupils' personal and academic skills well and is complemented by a wide range of clubs, sports activities and educational visits. The school is rightly proud of the excellent care it provides for each individual and the link with a local special school demonstrates its overriding concern to include each individual in all the school has to offer.

Strong leadership by an excellent headteacher and impressive senior team, high levels of teamwork and accurate self-evaluation have resulted in the school making significant improvements since the previous inspection. A more formal analysis of the impact of its activities in the local and wider communities is now needed if it is to build upon this work. Rack House Primary is a school in which pupils come first. It provides good value for money and has good capacity for further improvement.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise progress and attainment in mathematics by:

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- - providing more consistent challenge in lessons for all groups of pupils
- - offering pupils more opportunities to practise their skills in problem solving
- - ensuring teachers share assessment information across years so that teaching can build more effectively on prior learning
- - giving pupils more opportunities to improve their mathematical skills in all areas of the curriculum.
- Strengthen the school's promotion of community cohesion by a more formal evaluation of the impact of its work in the local area and beyond.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**2**

From low skills levels on entry to the Nursery, children, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, make good progress across the school, achieve and learn well and reach broadly average standards by the time they leave at the end of Year 6. Progress in English has been consistently good since the previous inspection and progress in mathematics was good up until 2008 when it began to decline. The school recognised this and the impact of its strategies to reverse this trend are now beginning to be seen in pupils' work at both key stages. Pupils' progress in Years 1 and 2 is now accelerating because the school has extended successful Early Years Foundation Stage teaching methods into Key Stage 1. Inspection evidence and pupils' performance in the classroom demonstrate that pupils are making better progress in mathematics and standards are rising, particularly by the end of Year 2. Nonetheless, more needs to be done to foster pupils' problem solving skills.

Pupils' behaviour and their willingness to take responsibility and show initiative has improved significantly since the previous inspection. Pupils' conduct in lessons and around school is now good and the number of exclusions has reduced markedly. Members of the school council, eco warriors and playground buddies, appointed following application and interview, do much to express the views of their constituents and to ensure that no one is lonely at breaks and lunchtimes. Pupils volunteer to deliver fruit to classrooms, to show visitors around school on open evenings and to visit the old people's home at Christmas. From the Nursery to Year 6, pupils have a keen awareness of what constitutes healthy food and they give visitors advice on why it is important to take regular physical exercise. They feel safe in school because, in their words, 'Our teachers are kind and are always there if we need any help.' The school does all it can to promote regular attendance, which is now broadly average, and its emphasis on punctuality leads to the vast majority of pupils arriving to school on time and eager to learn. The school is a racially harmonious community and pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. The leavers' production is one of the highlights of the school year. Pupils' good achievement in both their academic and personal development means that they are well prepared for high school and beyond.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

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Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

Teaching is characterised by secure planning and warm relationships in the classroom. In most lessons, there are opportunities for collaborative working and for pupils to act as a resource for their classmates' learning. In an outstanding Year 6 literacy lesson, for example, pupils worked exceptionally well in groups discussing the life of Mr Mistoffles and devising a questionnaire about his suitability for a job as a magician. On occasions, there is too much teacher direction and a lack of challenge, particularly in mathematics, to encourage pupils to reach for the higher National Curriculum levels. Teaching is particularly strong in the reading recovery sessions and also when teaching assistants support individuals to help them catch up with work they have found difficult. Ongoing assessment in class is good and teachers have a keen awareness of the progress their pupils are making. The school is now looking to improve the sharing of assessment data in mathematics across years so that teaching in this subject is based more solidly on pupils' prior learning.

'Super Learning Days', in which pupils of all years mix and work together, and the 'Higher Futures 4U' initiative with Manchester University are just two examples of the school's aim to develop a skills-based approach to curriculum planning. The curriculum has a positive impact on pupils' personal development and the links with a local special school ensure that pupils with complex difficulties are helped to develop their independence. There is a good range of extra-curricular clubs, for cookery, gardening

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low.

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and craftwork for example, and pupils in all years have opportunities to attend a variety of educational visits to sites such as Styal Mill and Lyme Park. Pupils enjoy their Spanish lessons and often greet visitors with 'Hola!' The curriculum places an appropriate emphasis on improving pupils' skills in literacy, numeracy, and information and communication technology. However, there are insufficient opportunities for pupils to develop their problem-solving skills in mathematics both in numeracy lessons and across the whole curriculum.

Pupils themselves speak highly of the outstanding care, guidance and support they receive from the adults who work with them. Staff recognise that support for pupils' emotional well-being is of the essence if they are to take full advantage of everything the school has to offer; strong pastoral care, the raising of pupils' self esteem, and equality of opportunity for all are at the very heart of the school's work. An impressive example is Happyland, a special room, named as such by the pupils themselves, where individuals can recharge their batteries and gain in confidence. The excellent guidance from both teachers and teaching assistants ensure that pupils identified as vulnerable and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities make the same good progress as their peers.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

The outstanding headteacher is a role model for the whole school community, leads by example and provides clear direction for all staff. The relatively new senior leadership team is both committed and enthusiastic and provides full support for less experienced teachers. An area for improvement at the time of the previous inspection, planning to improve the school is now based on accurate self-evaluation in all areas. Moreover, governors have a good understanding of the performance of the school and hold the leadership to account with increasing rigour. Indeed, meetings of the full governing body very often begin with presentations from subject or aspect leaders. Staff, both teaching and non-teaching, believe their views are taken into account and comment, 'We really feel valued as part of a team here.' Ongoing improvement is a byword in school and staff are fully aware that attainment and progress in mathematics, although improving, are not as high as they should be.

The school's contribution to community cohesion is satisfactory but it has yet to evaluate the impact of its work in the local community and beyond on outcomes for pupils, in

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order to plan for further development in this area. Home-school relationships are outstanding and parents and carers have the utmost confidence in the school. There are good partnerships with other schools and outside agencies for the benefit of pupils and safeguarding and child protection arrangements are very effective and meet national guidelines. The school's receipt of the Manchester Inclusion Award also demonstrates its emphasis on promoting equality of opportunity and tackling discrimination in all its forms.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	2
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	1
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children enter the Nursery with low skill levels, particularly in communication and personal development. They make good progress in both Nursery and Reception as a result of focused teaching and well planned and purposeful activities which engage their interest. By the time they enter Key Stage 1 many have met and some have exceeded the expectations for their age.

Effective planning and monitoring and good use of the outdoor environment help children to learn well. They have time to explore their ideas and are encouraged to share and to take responsibility. A good balance between teacher-led and child-initiated activities ensures that individual learning needs are met and specific skills are developed. Assessment in the Early Years Foundation Stage is outstanding. Records of children's achievements evaluate starting points and the next steps in learning effectively. Care and support for the children and their families are outstanding and children's safety and well-being are secure. Leadership and management are good and the Early Years Foundation Stage leader sets clear direction for development with a

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strong focus on enjoyment and achievement.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2

Views of parents and carers

Parents and carers have a high regard for the school and for what it does for their sons and daughters. Parents are particularly pleased with the support the school gives when their children are experiencing difficulty or when their behaviour is not as good as it should be. They believe that adults keep pupils safe and that their children really enjoy coming to school. As they comment, 'The school encourages our child's learning and development and they are always happy to attend.'

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Rack House Primary School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 92 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 220 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	108	64	59	35	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	112	67	55	33	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	97	58	66	40	4	2	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	103	62	61	37	3	2	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	105	63	60	36	2	1	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	101	60	63	38	4	2	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	94	56	71	43	2	1	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	80	50	78	48	2	1	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	83	50	82	49	2	1	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	84	50	82	49	0	0	1	1
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	78	47	87	52	1	1	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	96	57	71	43	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	102	61	64	39	0	0	0	0

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
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.

Overall effectiveness of schools inspected between September 2007 and July 2008

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	39	58	3	0
Primary schools	13	50	33	4
Secondary schools	17	40	34	9
Sixth forms	18	43	37	2
Special schools	26	54	18	2
Pupil referral units	7	55	30	7
All schools	15	49	32	5

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above were reported in The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills 2007/08.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
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.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.■ The quality of teaching.■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including where relevant, through partnerships.■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
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.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



Inspection of Rack House Primary School, Manchester M23 0BT

Thank you all so much for the wonderful welcome you gave to us when we visited your school recently. We would like to say a particular 'thank you' to the members of the school council and also to the other pupils who came to talk to us after lunch on Thursday. Year 6 are to be congratulated too! We really enjoyed the assembly they delivered and have not stopped singing, 'He's got the whole world in his hands' since! We know you wanted to find out how the inspection went so I thought I would write to you and let you know.

You are so right to be proud of Rack House Primary, because it is a good school. The care you get from the adults who work with you is excellent and you all get on so well together. You behave well too and the school council and playground buddies do all they can to make sure you are happy. You enjoy your lessons because your teachers teach you well and you are making good progress in your work. You feel safe in school, have a good understanding of right and wrong and you are very polite to visitors. You know how to eat healthily and why it is important to keep fit. You also enjoy the many extra-curricular activities, trips and clubs you attend and Year 6 had a marvellous time at Styal Mill on Friday.

Your headteacher and all the other staff do a really good job in making your school what it is and they are always looking for ways to make Rack House Primary even better. We have asked them therefore to help you make more progress in mathematics by setting you more challenges in class, getting you to improve your problem-solving skills and giving you more opportunities to practise your mathematics in other subjects too. We have also asked them to assess the value of the school's work in the local community and beyond.

Thanks again for being so kind and friendly to us. Please keep trying hard, coming to school regularly and looking after each other.

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