

Rift House Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	111640
Local Authority	Hartlepool
Inspection number	337715
Inspection dates	27–28 January 2010
Reporting inspector	Carol Gater

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	172
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Tim Lightfoot
Headteacher	Mrs Carole Carroll
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Masefield Road Hartlepool County Durham TS25 4JY
Telephone number	01429 275239
Fax number	01429 292188
Email address	admin.rifthouse@hartlepool.gov.uk

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Royal Exchange Buildings
St Ann's Square
Manchester M2 7LA

T: 08456 404045

Textphone: 0161 618 8524

E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk

W: www.ofsted.gov.uk

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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors who visited seven lessons and held meetings with governors, staff, groups of pupils, and parents and carers. Approximately 60% of the time was spent looking at learning and most teachers were seen. Inspectors also looked at policies, school improvement plans and tracking systems and analysed 66 questionnaires from parents and carers.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following:

- the progress that pupils make throughout the school, particularly in mathematics
- the quality of teaching and learning and its impact on the progress pupils make
- the effectiveness of monitoring systems in securing good outcomes for all pupils.

Information about the school

Rift House is a smaller than average size school, serving an area of considerable economic disadvantage. The number of pupils eligible for free school meals is well above the average. The percentage of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities has increased and is now also above average. There are very few pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds and who speak English as an additional language.

The school provides out-of-school care in the form of a breakfast and an after-school club. The Early Years Foundation Stage unit includes a Nursery class. A children's centre is located on the site.

The school has achieved a number of awards, including National Healthy Schools status and Active Mark.

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

At the heart of this good school is the effective care and support that it provides for pupils and their families. Parents and carers are overwhelmingly supportive of the school and praise the commitment of all staff. They comment on the strong leadership of the headteacher and the fact that she is 'friendly and approachable'. Some parents and carers chose the school because of its excellent reputation in addressing pupils' emotional needs and they say that their children 'thrive' and 'shine' in the inclusive ethos.

The headteacher has successfully developed a positive climate for learning, based on valuing and respecting all individuals. As a result, behaviour in the classroom and outside in the playground is exemplary. The curriculum provides many opportunities for pupils to develop knowledge and understanding that is important for their lives now and for the future. They have an excellent awareness of how to stay safe and keep healthy and are proud that their school was chosen to be filmed by the National Healthy Schools Programme to showcase best practice. Pupils are willing to take on responsibility; they act as buddies, sports leaders, monitors and members of the school council. They organise fundraising events to help others who are less fortunate than themselves.

By the time pupils leave Year 6 standards are broadly average. This represents good progress from starting points that are well below what is typical for this age. In some cases progress for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is outstanding. The school has concentrated its energies on developing pupils' literacy and numeracy skills, ensuring that the curriculum offers scope to practise and consolidate these. Planning for the progression of skills is less well developed in other subjects. Teachers have high expectations and plan work to match the needs of individuals. Pupils say that teachers 'make learning fun' and help if they 'struggle with [their] work'. Teachers and teaching assistants work well together to raise self-esteem and promote independent learning.

The leadership team has an accurate picture of the school's strengths and areas for development. Actions taken are effective as can be seen in the rising standards in writing and better progress being made in mathematics. Governors and staff are committed to providing the best personal and academic education for pupils in their care. Improvement since the last inspection is good. The appointment of a social inclusion assistant has strengthened communication with parents and carers and helped to raise the profile of attendance. This is now in line with national figures. Good links have been made with the children's centre to improve induction to the Early Years Foundation Stage unit. The school has good capacity for further improvement.

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What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Strengthen the curriculum by ensuring that teachers give more attention to the progression of skills in all subjects.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

All pupils have good attitudes to learning and enjoy their lessons. Pupils work hard and respond well to teachers' high expectations. All classes have a role-play area and the imaginative use of these areas has improved pupils' enthusiasm for writing. Pupils make good progress from well below average starting points and over the last three years attainment by the end of Year 6 has matched national averages. There has been an increase in the number of pupils reaching the higher levels. The focus on speaking and listening, and drama has reaped benefits in higher standards of writing. Last year's national test results in writing for Year 6 were well above the national average. Work in books and the school's own assessments show that good progress is now being made in both English and mathematics. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make good and occasionally outstanding progress. Their needs are quickly identified and teachers and well-trained teaching assistants deliver effective support.

Behaviour is excellent; pupils show respect for each other and for adults. Pupils at Rift House confidently say they feel safe at school and they value the calm way in which the headteacher deals with any problems. They really know the importance of adopting a healthy lifestyle and take advantage of the many extra activities the school offers. All pupils participate in daily energisers and older pupils complete diaries to track and target their own healthy choices. They are keen to take on responsibilities, such as caring for younger pupils or being a member of the school council. Older pupils are proactive in acquiring funds for the school. The Rift House TV crew made a successful bid and produced a DVD to advertise an outdoor centre. In addition to exemplifying good technical skills, the film shows how well pupils can organise themselves, adapt to different situations and communicate with a wide range of people. Pupils very much enjoy learning through these real-life experiences. Currently, the headteacher is making links with another school to extend pupils' understanding of different cultures.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

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

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

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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	1
Pupils' behaviour	1
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	1
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 effective and teachers know the pupils well. Lessons are lively and teachers have high expectations of pupils' behaviour and the quality of their work. Good subject knowledge, clear explanations and practical activities engage pupils' interest. Teachers skilfully use open-ended questions to encourage pupils to explain their thinking. Teaching assistants are deployed well and enable pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities to make good progress. Teachers are thorough in using assessment information to plan work that matches individual needs. Many examples of marking give points for improvement and there is evidence of pupils acting on the advice given.

The curriculum is enriched by a wide range of activities, including football, cricket, rugby, choir and rock climbing. A varied programme of visits and visitors provides added experiences that have a positive impact on pupils' personal development.

Participation in a local TV initiative has improved media skills and pupils make topical documentaries that are shared with members of the local and wider community. To support academic development, the curriculum has been well planned to provide opportunities for pupils to practise their literacy and numeracy skills. However, there is some inconsistency in planning for the progression of skills in other subjects.

Care and support for all pupils are good. Investment in high-quality equipment and the employment of additional adults ensure that playtimes are safe and enjoyed by all. The school works very well with external agencies to provide effective support for vulnerable pupils. The school's intervention programmes and individual support sessions are effectively tailored to meet pupils' needs. Transition between classes is good and the school is working to enhance further the transition to secondary settings for all pupils.

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There are examples of excellent provision to help vulnerable pupils in the move to their new schools. The breakfast and after-school club are well attended and provide good opportunities for social and personal development.

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	2

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher provides clear leadership and is well respected by pupils, and parents and carers. She has been central to creating a calm, purposeful environment where all individuals are valued. The local authority has identified Rift House as a lead school in the management of behaviour, and its approach and strategies are shared with other schools.

The leadership team accurately evaluates the quality of provision and, since the last inspection, systems to monitor pupils' progress have become firmly embedded. The assistant headteachers provide good support in the school's strong drive to raise attainment. There has been a successful focus on using the expertise in the school to promote consistently good teaching. There is a commitment to ensure the equality of provision for all pupils and all play a full part in what the school offers. Governors are very aware of the school's strengths and share the headteacher's determination to tackle areas for development. Safeguarding requirements are met and good procedures are in place to ensure the safety of staff and pupils. Relationships with parents and carers are good and the school does a great deal to involve them in their children's learning. The school contributes well to community cohesion. Provision is carefully planned and evaluated so that the school is at the heart of the community. It works in partnership with a range of services to provide good outcomes for its pupils and their families. Actions are in place to improve further pupils' understanding of other cultures. Resources are well deployed and the school provides good value for money.

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

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	
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
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	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children enter the Nursery class with skills at levels that are well below those expected for their age, particularly in speech and language, calculation, and social and emotional development. Despite making good progress throughout the Early Years Foundation Stage, when they start Year 1 overall attainment is below age-related expectations.

Children settle very quickly and happily into routines. They respond to teachers' high expectations and positive feedback. As a result, behaviour is very good and pupils interact well with each other. They feel safe in this welcoming environment. The quality of teaching is good and teachers use assessment information well to plan activities across all areas. Questions are skilfully used to prompt the next steps in learning for individuals. Outdoor provision is good and children enjoy exploring and investigating in the well-resourced area. There is a good balance between the activities led by adults and those which children confidently choose for themselves. Monitoring of focused tasks is good and is developing in the activities that children choose independently. Children's progress, informed by thorough observations and annotated photographs, is detailed in 'learning journey' files. These have proved popular with parents and carers and are available during the early morning meet and greet sessions.

The provision is well led and managed. The Early Years Foundation Stage leader has created a strong team. Procedures to ensure children's welfare are good and meet statutory requirements. The setting is inclusive and very good provision is made for children with special educational needs and/or disabilities so that they enjoy full access to learning and make good progress.

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

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

Views of parents and carers

Parents and carers are overwhelmingly supportive of the work of the school. They feel that their children are extremely safe and enjoy coming to school. The inspection evidence confirms their views.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Rift 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 66 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 172 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	44	66	22	33	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	56	84	11	16	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	51	76	16	24	0	0	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	45	67	21	31	1	1	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	48	72	19	28	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	49	73	18	27	0	0	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	48	72	19	28	0	0	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)	40	60	27	40	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	47	70	19	28	0	0	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	49	73	18	27	0	0	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	44	66	23	34	0	0	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	50	75	17	25	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	50	75	17	25	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 pupil's 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.



29 January 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Rift House Primary School, Hartlepool, TS25 4JY

Thank you very much for making us so welcome when we visited your school. We very much enjoyed talking to you and appreciated all the information you offered us.

We were very impressed by your excellent behaviour, both in school and on the playground. You are fortunate to have so much to do at play time.

Rift House Primary is a good school and your teachers make sure that you are extremely well cared for and supported in your learning. You obviously feel very safe because of this. You certainly understand how to lead a healthy lifestyle and are proud that your school was filmed to share your good practice with others in the country. It was also very interesting for us to see the exciting video clips that your own television crew have expertly produced. Your performances show real talent!

Many of you say that your teachers 'make lessons fun' and help you if you are struggling. You make good progress in reading, writing and mathematics. You enjoy the topic work you do that links other subjects together. We have asked your teachers to make sure that there are more opportunities for you to develop skills in other subjects.

Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage settle quickly into your school. This is because of the good support they have from teachers and because older pupils act as excellent role models.

Keep up the good work!

We wish you every success for the future.

Yours faithfully

Carol Gater

Lead Inspector

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