

Roach Vale Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	114823
Local Authority	Essex
Inspection number	338456
Inspection dates	19–20 January 2010
Reporting inspector	Norma Ball

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	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	188
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Chris Orme
Headteacher	Mrs Serena Williams
Date of previous school inspection	3 November 2006
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 12 lessons and saw eight teachers and two teaching support assistants. In total 60% of the inspectors' time was given to looking at learning. Inspectors met with parents informally on the first morning of the inspection, and held meetings with the headteacher, subject leaders, teaching staff, governors and pupils. Inspectors observed the school's work; this included scrutinising samples of pupils' work, school data, management and curriculum documentation, teachers' planning and systems for tracking pupils' progress, safeguarding documentation and 30 parental questionnaires.

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

- the strategies employed by the school to raise attainment in English for all pupils and for girls in mathematics and science
- how well staff use what they know about pupils to ensure they are appropriately challenged and make the best progress they can, especially higher attaining pupils
- how well the curriculum is enriched and extended to provide a broad learning experience for all pupils
- how well leaders and managers monitor and evaluate the school and work effectively to improve attainment and drive the school forward.

Information about the school

Roach Vale is smaller than average. Most pupils are of White British heritage. A small number of pupils come from a range of minority ethnic backgrounds and a few speak English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is much larger than found nationally. The majority of these pupils have speech and moderate learning difficulties and none has a statement of special educational needs. The school has gained the Active Mark and Healthy Schools awards, reflecting the commitment to promoting pupils' healthy lifestyles. The school applied to join the Improving School Performance programme in 2008.

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

Pupils like coming to school, as their good attendance shows. They enjoy their lessons and one pupil summed this up by saying, 'I really like my school because I like learning lots and we do exciting things.' Pupils have a good awareness of how to keep themselves safe and healthy. All staff assign a high priority to the care of pupils and as a result safeguarding requirements are extremely well met. Pupils behave well to adults and to each other. The majority of parents are positive in their views of the school and are especially pleased that their children enjoy their time at Roach Vale.

The school has managed well the challenges arising from staff absences and changes. As a result of careful deployment of senior staff, pupils have continued to make good progress and attainment meets national averages in English, mathematics and science. Attainment has improved in English and the gap between boys' and girls' attainment in mathematics and science has closed. The school has used to good advantage the support provided by the Improving School Performance programme in improving standards. However, the close focus on English and mathematics within the programme limits the time available for other subjects. The gradual development of links between subjects has ensured that the curriculum provides a satisfactory breadth of study for pupils.

Pupils' progress is now tracked accurately and staff are gaining confidence in using this information to plan work that matches pupils' ability more closely. However, this is still inconsistent across the school, and pupils of higher ability in particular are not sufficiently challenged to do as well as they can and their progress is adversely affected as a result. The steady improvement in teaching has been interrupted by staff absences and changes and although progress for pupils is good in Years 5 and 6, it remains satisfactory in Years 3 and 4. Another aspect of teaching which is too variable is the promotion of progress through careful marking of pupils' work. Not all teachers use marking to good effect to show pupils exactly how and where their work can be improved. Teaching support assistants are well deployed and provide effective support for pupils with special educational needs and/or difficulties, and they also make good progress from their individual starting points.

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher provides leadership of a high quality which unites staff, and engenders a positive team spirit and drive for improvement within the school. Changes in subject leadership arising from the redeployment of senior staff have been well managed and new leaders are embracing their roles and responsibilities with enthusiasm. Governors provide good support and, led well by the chairman, are improving their skills so they offer greater challenge and are playing an increasingly valuable part in monitoring improvements. Leaders at all

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levels have a clear awareness of what the school does well and where its weaknesses lie. The school is well placed to continue on its path of improvement.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that teachers improve the use of assessment information to plan work that consistently matches the needs of different groups of pupils and extends challenge, especially for the more able.
- Ensure that pupils know how to improve their work by sharing existing good practice amongst teachers in the quality and rigour of their marking.

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

Pupils make good progress in their learning. They settle quickly to their tasks, love to discuss ideas in pairs and small groups and are confident to express their views to the whole class because they know what they say will be respected. Pupils concentrate and work well because they are interested in their work. They know what they are expected to learn in lessons and clear targets identify the next steps in their learning.

The school has rightly prioritised improving achievement in English and mathematics, and this has clearly paid dividends. The school is not complacent, and has now moved the focus to raising attainment in science. Work seen in lessons, pupils' books and the school's own data shows that achievement is improving as a result of the accurate tracking of the progress that pupils make, and better use of assessment data. It was seen to be most effective in Years 5 and 6, where teachers set consistently high expectations and structure work well to extend pupils and promote improved progress. The progress for pupils of higher ability has improved, particularly in mathematics, where teaching is more consistently good and higher expectations are set by teachers. It remains a focus in English and science. The progress of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is also good because their needs are accurately assessed and a flexible and effective range of support is provided for them. They gain confidence and this in turn promotes their learning.

Pupils are clear about how they are expected to behave, show respect and care for one another and are encouraged to reflect on the needs and feelings of others. Older pupils carry out important responsibilities such as acting as play leaders with diligence and pride, and the school council is an active and respected force within the school. Pupils enjoy finding out about other faiths, are keen in their support of a pupil in India, and actively discuss behaviour and responsibilities. As a result their social, moral, spiritual and cultural development is good. A good awareness of the benefits of a healthy lifestyle and how to stay safe is reinforced well throughout the school. Pupils show a keen awareness of their community and one pupil explained how much they had all enjoyed a visit to a local retirement home to entertain the residents. As a result of their good achievement, the good social skills they acquire and their enjoyment of learning, pupils are well placed for the next stage of their education.

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These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

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	2
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

The extended absence of two very experienced members of staff and the difficulty in making a permanent appointment following the retirement of a respected member of staff have hindered the improvement of teaching throughout the school, despite careful redeployment of staff. However, teachers create a consistently welcoming learning environment. Relationships at every level are harmonious and this contributes to the good learning ethos in all classrooms. Subject knowledge is good in English and mathematics and developing in science. Teachers use a good range of strategies and set tasks that are interesting and so engage pupils well. The school has worked diligently to establish good procedures for tracking pupils' progress but some teachers do not use what they know about pupils to plan tasks to promote their progress more effectively. For example, able pupils sometimes finish their tasks quickly and are given more of the same work to do rather than having work planned for them that would stretch them and accelerate their progress. A clear marking policy is used very effectively by some teachers to praise effort and highlight where and how work can be improved. However, this good practice is not consistently applied. Marking is rigorous and evaluative in Years

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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5 and 6, where it has a positive impact on the progress that pupils make.

The curriculum ensures an appropriate range of learning experiences for all pupils. English and mathematics are strongly focused but careful planning ensures there is appropriate time for science and communication technology as well as foundation subjects. The development of links between subjects is satisfactory. In Year 4, for example, studies of ancient Greece included history, geography, literacy, drama and art. Regular theme weeks such as multicultural week are enjoyed by pupils and add a valuable dimension to their learning. Visitors to school, trips and clubs also extend and enrich the curriculum soundly. There are fewer clubs available to younger pupils because of its limited staff time but a sound range for the older age group. Pupils are confident that they can confide their worries and problems in adults who care for them, and are assured of their guidance and support. The security which pupils feel in school and the trust they have in teachers and other staff contribute well to their positive approach to learning. The good care provided by the school is extended by the good links built with a range of partners and external agencies such as social services as well as the Primary Sports Partnership and Learning Network.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	3
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	3
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher's commitment to the school and ambitious drive to bring about continued improvement are shared by all staff. The challenges of staffing difficulties have been met with ingenuity and determination. Senior staff have been very supportive and flexible in undertaking new responsibilities and meeting the challenges of new roles very quickly. New subject leaders are gaining confidence rapidly. They are extending their skills and are beginning to monitor developments in their subjects, including teaching and learning, the use of assessment information and planning, but recognise there is still more to do.

Governors know the school well and have a clear understanding of areas of strength and weakness, and are beginning to play a pivotal role in strategic planning. Safeguarding arrangements are exemplary and at the heart of the good care that is provided for all pupils within this harmonious community that is free of discrimination. Community cohesion is well managed and a clear plan for the development of pupils' appreciation of their future role as local and global citizens is monitored carefully.

Links with parents are good and have recently been augmented with regular tea and

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talk sessions at which parents can discuss their views with staff. Leaders and managers are not complacent and recognise that there is more which can be accomplished. Pupils' achievement is improving, issues identified in the last inspection are continuing to be addressed and are very much work in progress, self-evaluation is searching and accurate and there is a tangible determination to achieve further improvements in all areas of the school's work. As a result of this the school has good capacity to improve further.

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	3
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	3
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	1
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 settle happily and quickly in the attractive Reception environment. Good resources ensure that all areas of learning are covered well in both the inside and outside learning areas. The new leader of the Early Years Foundation Stage has quickly established a good relationship with other staff, including the second part time teacher. She is developing her role and reviewing the planning and procedures in Reception but is not fully tested yet in her leadership role. Safe routines are well established in both the inside and outside learning areas so children thrive and develop a love for school and enthusiasm to learn.

Pupils enter Reception with skills and abilities that are particularly weak in all elements of language and literacy and numeracy. Good teaching and a range of well planned activities ensure that they make good progress and enter Year 1 closer to the expected level in speaking and listening but still lower in all other areas of their learning. Through imaginative play children are encouraged to explore and particularly develop their language skills. The dark bear cave was a source of great delight and could be a den for

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the dinosaurs they were learning about or a secret quiet place to hide. Staff subtly encourage children to talk about what they are doing and explain their ideas, as well as developing language skills in more adult-led learning sessions. Children mix well, learn to share and show developing independence. All areas of their development are closely monitored and regularly recorded. Links with parents are well established so parents have regular information about their children, know what they will be learning and are provided with guidance to support their development at home.

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

Of the 16% of parents who returned questionnaires, the majority were pleased with the school and in particular they felt their children enjoyed school and were helped to be safe and healthy. About a quarter of parents expressed concerns about how well the school took account of their views and how well the school was led and managed. Leaders and managers are aware that some parents in one year group have felt unhappy that arrangements for a school trip to London were amended following the absence on sick leave of the class teacher. About a fifth of parents felt that unacceptable behaviour was not dealt with effectively. During the inspection behaviour in lessons and around the school was good, and inspectors judged that both leadership and management and links with parents were good.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Roach Vale 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 inspector received 30 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 188 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	16	53	12	40	1	3	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	14	47	15	50	1	3	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	4	13	24	80	1	3	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	7	23	19	63	2	7	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	10	33	16	53	1	3	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	8	27	18	60	1	3	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	12	40	18	60	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)	4	13	22	73	1	3	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	7	23	18	60	1	3	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	5	17	15	52	6	21	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	3	10	15	50	5	17	2	7
The school is led and managed effectively	8	27	12	40	7	23	1	3
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	8	27	18	60	2	7	1	3

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.



21 January 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Roach Vale Primary School, Colchester, CO4 3YN

Thank you for welcoming us to your school and being so helpful and polite to us. We were impressed to see how much you enjoyed your lessons and you told us you find learning fun because teachers make your lessons interesting. You get on well together and behave well. You know a lot about being safe and healthy. We think that you make good progress in your time at Roach Vale and that you are well cared for. You make a good contribution to your community and are learning a lot about the world in which you live. The headteacher, other staff and governors work well together to make your school a happy and successful place in which to learn.

You told us yours was a good school and we agree with you. We have asked your teachers to do two things to help you to make your school even better.

Your teachers should plan work for you that is not too difficult and not too easy so that you are encouraged to do as well as you possibly can, especially those of you who find learning easier.

When teachers mark your work we have asked that they do this very carefully and make it clear how you can improve what you have done and make even better progress.

You can help by continuing to work hard and doing your best at school. It was a great pleasure to visit Roach Vale and we wish you every success for the future.

Yours sincerely

Norma Ball

Lead inspector

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