

Round Diamond Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	117299
Local Authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	338987
Inspection dates	12–13 May 2010
Reporting inspector	Andrew Stafford

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	488
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Alastair Coates
Headteacher	Mrs Deborah Godbold
Date of previous school inspection	9 October 2006
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by four additional inspectors, who spent the majority of time observing learning. The inspection team saw 18 teachers, visited 24 lessons and made tours of the school to sample work on display and evaluate aspects of the curriculum. They met with governors, staff and pupils, and had informal talks with parents. Additionally they scrutinised a range of documentation, including data showing how well each pupil makes progress, a variety of policies and information about safeguarding pupils. They analysed questionnaires returned by 141 parents, 106 pupils and 23 members of staff.

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

- how improvements in teaching have raised attainment in mathematics and writing, especially for boys
- how assessment data and the tracking of pupils' progress inform the strategies senior leaders adopt to raise standards.

Information about the school

This is a large school. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is higher than is typical nationally. These mostly relate to speech, communication, social and emotional needs. A 15-place speech and language unit is a special feature of the school. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups is above average. There are a broadly average number of pupils whose home language is not English. The school roll is increasing as families move into new local housing. Learning in the Early Years Foundation Stage is through one Nursery class and two Reception classes

The school provides before- and after-school childcare which is reported on separately. The school has received several awards such as the Basic Skills Quality Mark for its work in developing literacy and numeracy, and national Healthy Schools status.

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 and well-led school. Since the previous inspection several developments have contributed to improved attainment and progress. Systems for checking each pupil's progress are more thorough and used effectively by all staff. This is contributing to teachers' planning effectively to meet pupils' differing needs. It also enables staff to evaluate more efficiently the effectiveness of any extra help they are providing to support pupils' progress. The rigour of the school's self-evaluation processes and the impact of various initiatives that have brought about improvement, especially in mathematics, indicate that the school has good capacity for sustained improvement. The majority of teaching is good, although there are examples of both outstanding and satisfactory lessons. On occasions it is not always made clear to pupils what is expected of them when they begin individual or small-group work, and so opportunities are missed for them to assess their own learning precisely against expectations.

Most children join the Nursery with poor language skills and their mathematics skills are below expectations for their age. During their time in school, the majority of girls achieve average levels in writing. Middle- and lower-ability boys do not reach the same standard. The school invests a great deal of time and resources in successfully helping boys and girls to develop confidence as learners. Its good care, guidance and support contribute significantly to the outstanding progress made by individual pupils who receive special support to help them overcome potential barriers to learning. This explains why the school has a good reputation in the community, for its provision for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, leading parents to transfer their children into the school. The good progress made by the large majority of pupils throughout the school means that pupils leave Year 6 with broadly average levels of attainment in English, mathematics and science. Pupils' learning is enhanced by their good behaviour. They are friendly towards each other and cooperate well in lessons, contributing to a harmonious school community. Pupils have excellent awareness of the need for vigorous exercise and the importance of a balanced diet, and what are the possible outcomes for people who lack this awareness.

The leadership team provides much helpful monitoring of teaching and learning which contributes to frequent dialogue about improving provision. This has identified that the feedback teachers give to pupils about the next steps in their learning, although accurate, is insufficiently focused on how quickly the required progress should be made. Ambitions for further school development are shared among a cohesive staff team, whose work is much appreciated by parents through the school's outstanding links with them. The parents who returned questionnaires were overwhelmingly supportive of the school's actions to ensure the good care and education of their children.

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What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise attainment through ensuring greater consistency in the quality of teaching and learning over the next year by:
 - specifying precise expectations of different groups of pupils in lessons
 - encouraging pupils to assess themselves regularly against these expectations
 - providing pupils with feedback on how quickly they need to achieve the next steps in their learning.
- Raise the attainment of middle- and lower-ability boys in writing to match that of the girls.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Inspectors took a particular interest in boys' progress in writing because this has been a recent school focus. During the inspection, both boys and girls in Year 5 achieved well and enjoyed writing instructions for guiding blindfolded partners around an obstacle course. Learning for both boys and girls of all abilities was impressive when pupils in Year 6 prepared to write a story based on their reactions to a DVD titled 'The Quest'. This was exemplified by boys who find writing quite difficult responding well to the teacher's questions about how to make their writing accurate and interesting. One showed his understanding of the requirements stating: 'That was a terrifying feature', referring to a sequence in the DVD.

In the lessons observed by inspectors higher-attaining pupils made good progress alongside their classmates. Pupils in the speech and language unit were observed making good gains in literacy. They were highly motivated and eager to do well because of the positive relationships established between adults and pupils. The use of skilful questioning about appealing stories led to excitement, enjoyment and good achievement.

Pupils consistently work well together and positive relationships help them to feel safe and secure. This contributes to the good progress made by pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Pupils whose home language is not English make good progress in their understanding and use of the language. Throughout the school, pupils' consideration for others reflects the school's well-established procedures for promoting good behaviour and good provision for personal and social development. Reflecting the work associated with the Healthy Schools status, pupils have an excellent understanding of how to keep healthy. They said they were involved in a wide range of sporting activities and their science lessons made them aware of how heart disease and diabetes arose. Their good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is reflected in their interest in the world around them, their appreciation of opportunities to extend their experiences and the value they place on attributes such as kindness. While attendance rates match the national average, the school is doing all it can to work with the small, decreasing proportion of families whose children are often absent. Pupils willingly accept responsibilities, and are satisfactorily prepared for their futures. Their

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skills in physical education are well developed, as are their information and communication technology (ICT) skills, reflecting the school's achievement of the ICT Excellence Mark.

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	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	3
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

Inspectors found many good features of teaching in all lessons. Teachers have good relationships with pupils which contribute to positive, and often subtle behaviour management, so lessons are rarely interrupted. Teachers routinely explain clearly to pupils what they are to learn at the start of lessons. However, their expectations are not always precise enough for pupils of different levels of ability to be completely clear about what they are aiming for while working independently. This also makes it difficult for pupils to assess their own learning. When teaching is satisfactory, it is because the pace slows for part of the lesson and expectations are not high enough to accelerate pupils' learning. Occasionally teaching is outstanding, when expectations are extremely high and very skilful questioning keeps pupils highly focused and continually appraising their work.

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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Strengths in the curriculum lie in its interest and relevance to both boys and girls and its excellent contribution to their awareness of what constitutes a healthy lifestyle. Regular opportunities to write creatively and extensively contribute to improved attainment and progress for all groups of pupils. The school has introduced systematic opportunities for pupils to express their ideas orally before recording them on paper. It is too soon for the full impact of this initiative to be felt, but it is already adding enjoyment. The school has a raft of special programmes, well matched to pupils' needs, to help pupils who find learning difficult, especially for those in the speech and language unit. Pupils benefit from specialist provision for physical education, and appreciate a wide range of sporting opportunities through effective links with a local secondary school. They also benefit from stimulating opportunities to use ICT that enrich their learning. While there are special events for pupils who show particular talents, such as sports activities and singing at events in the community, developments to support higher-attaining pupils in lessons are not yet embedded.

The school is extremely caring and supportive of pupils, especially those who face difficult circumstances. The roles of the inclusion leader and family worker play a significant part in reaching out to parents and carers to the benefit of pupils. An example of this is the school's success in reducing the extent of persistent absence. Several parents and carers, and pupils themselves, remarked on their smooth transition from other schools because of the good care from staff and friendliness of pupils.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

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

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher, supported by the deputy headteacher and Chair of the Governing Body, provides strong leadership and steers school improvement, while empowering others. The school promotes equal opportunities satisfactorily. Most notable is the successful work being done to close the gap in the progress made by girls and boys in writing and also to reduce potential barriers to learning for those pupils in difficult circumstances. Since the previous inspection, all staff have taken greater responsibility for contributing to school improvement and raising pupils' attainment and progress. This is a cohesive school where adults share a strong commitment to doing their best for pupils and have a good understanding of the school's strengths and its priorities. The implementation of rigorous systems to check each pupil's progress is holding teachers more closely to account. These systems are also being used by staff and governors to

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ensure that special support programmes are working effectively. The governing body plays an active role in supporting the school's endeavours and holding senior staff to account. They provide a good level of knowledge and expertise that underpins good safeguarding procedures. Governors and staff show a strong understanding of child protection issues and procedures are rigorously applied across all areas of the school's work.

Staff and governors have a thorough understanding of the local community. They have been successful in promoting an ethos that is appreciative of the growing diversity within the school community. There are many examples of the school being at the hub of the community through, for example, the extensive use of the school's facilities by a growing number of organisations as families move into new local housing. Parents and carers are engaged especially strongly through the diverse range of opportunities the school offers to enable them to help with their children's education.

The school has begun to make links with another school which has a more diverse population than its own. This is as a result of the recognition that pupils have somewhat limited awareness of the experiences of children in different circumstances and is an area for further development.

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	3
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

The Early Years Foundation Stage staff share a commitment to helping children make good progress in a safe and nurturing environment. They are successful in promoting the children's personal and social skills and readiness to learn. Children make good

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progress in acquiring the key skills that underpin future learning in literacy and numeracy. For example, when they were immersed in a variety of interesting activities both inside and outside, they made good gains in recognising and ordering numbers. Their understanding is supported through, for example, using toys that help with counting. On the occasions when adults spend too long giving children explanations, learning is satisfactory rather than good because opportunities to learn through direct experience are constrained.

The leader of the provision has an astute understanding of its strengths and priorities for future development. Consequently, children are increasingly learning through activities of their own choice, which enhances their experience. Most importantly, the team is making regular, useful observations of what children are achieving and using this information to plan further activities. The leader has correctly recognised that this needs further development so that staff identify the next step in learning when they make observations of an individual child. That said, there are examples of skilful adult interventions that support children as they practise their skills. For example, children showed they had control of tools such as pencils and a computer mouse while using programmes that imaginatively develop their reading skills. Well-timed adult questioning meant they also increasingly voiced their ideas while creating their own maps of towns, explaining, for example, that they had included 'where the car gets food'.

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

Most parents and carers who responded to the questionnaire are highly appreciative of the school's work and say that their children are kept safe. Almost all think that teaching is good and that the school helps parents to support their children's learning. A few parents and carers were concerned about how the school prepares children for the future and how effectively the school is led and managed. These concerns were not shared by most parents and carers nor substantiated by inspection findings or by pupils. Several parents and carers commended the headteacher and staff for their approachability.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Round Diamond 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 141 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 488 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	86	61	48	34	6	4	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	98	70	39	28	3	2	1	1
The school informs me about my child's progress	74	52	58	41	8	6	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	73	52	60	43	3	2	4	3
The teaching is good at this school	78	55	57	40	3	2	2	1
The school helps me to support my child's learning	75	53	60	43	5	4	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	62	43	69	49	9	6	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)	61	43	62	44	11	8	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	75	53	55	39	8	6	1	1
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	69	49	64	45	3	2	3	2
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	64	45	66	47	8	6	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	73	52	56	40	8	6	3	2
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	78	55	55	39	5	4	2	1

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

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	51	45	0	4
Primary schools	6	41	42	10
Secondary schools	8	34	44	14
Sixth forms	10	37	50	3
Special schools	32	38	25	5
Pupil referral units	12	43	31	14
All schools	9	40	40	10

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 is for the period 1 September to 31 December 2009 and is the most recently published data available (see www.ofsted.gov.uk). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn term 2009 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

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.



14 May 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Round Diamond Primary School, Stevenage, SG1 6NH

Thank you for being so friendly and helpful when we inspected your school recently. We enjoyed meeting you all very much. A special thank you goes to those of you who met with me or my colleagues to show us your work and share your ideas about the school. We agree with you and your parents that you go to a good school. Here are some of the good things we found.

You make good progress in English, mathematics and science.

You are developing good skills in ICT and physical education.

You usually learn well in lessons because you behave well and the teachers plan carefully to give you work that suits your abilities.

You have plenty of interesting activities and contribute good ideas to the school council to make school an even better place to be.

The adults in school are extremely caring and supportive of you and give you extra help when you need it.

The headteacher, governing body and senior staff do a good job running the school and in working with your teachers and support staff to make it even better.

We have asked the teachers to make absolutely clear what they expect from you when you are working independently or in small groups, so you can judge how well you are doing more often and more accurately. We have also asked them to make sure that they give you clear feedback about how well you have learned and tell you how quickly they want you to reach the next steps. We have also asked teachers to make sure that boys who find writing difficult are helped to reach the same standards as girls.

You can all help by continuing to work as hard as you do now. We wish you every success in the future.

Yours sincerely

Andrew Stafford

Lead inspector

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