

The Richard Heathcote Community Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	132043
Local Authority	Staffordshire
Inspection number	341276
Inspection dates	21–22 January 2010
Reporting inspector	Peter Kerr

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	177
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Dr Robin Jeffries
Headteacher	Sylvia Rizak
Date of previous school inspection	0 October 2006
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. Half the inspection time was spent looking at learning. Seventeen visits were made to classrooms, 12 lessons observed and nine teachers seen, including three visiting subject specialists. Meetings were held with governors, teachers and pupils. The inspectors observed the school's work, and looked at school policies, monitoring records and staff and pupil questionnaire returns. Eighty-four parental questionnaires were also analysed.

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

- the progress of pupils in each year group
- provision for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities
- the impact of staff changes on progress and how effectively this has been managed
- how well subjects are linked together in the curriculum.

Information about the school

This is a small rural school with a combined Nursery and Reception unit catering for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Almost all pupils are of White British origin and there are no pupils at the early stages of learning English. The proportion of children known to be eligible for free school meals is below average and the proportion with special educational needs and/or disabilities is below average. In some year groups there is a large imbalance between boys and girls. In the recent past there has been a significant turnover of staff. The school now has a settled staffing situation, with a mix of very new and well-established teachers. The school holds the Healthy Schools award and the Basic Skills quality 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?

3

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

3

Main findings

The school is a happy, thriving community that provides a satisfactory quality of education. It has some good features. Considerable staff changes contributed to a decline in standards in 2007. Since then broadly average standards have been maintained at Years 2 and 6 despite further staff changes. Staffing arrangements are currently stable.

Children get off to a good start in the Nursery and Reception classes because the provision is consistently good with some outstanding features. The leader has an excellent understanding of the needs of young children and ensures that they learn rapidly and enjoyably, largely through child-initiated play. The quality of learning and progress is satisfactory in the rest of the school, reflecting teaching that is consistently at least satisfactory, and sometimes better. Newly and recently qualified staff are beginning to make a significant contribution. In the best lessons, a wide variety of techniques to stimulate active learning keep the pupils on their toes. In the less effective lessons, pupils are more static and most interactions are through the teacher, thus limiting the development of their independent learning skills. The tracking of pupils' progress is now good, but the resulting information is not yet used effectively enough to ensure that all lessons move pupils on in their learning. As a result, some pupils do work that is too easy and their progress is constrained. In contrast, some pupils with significant educational needs often make good progress because of good individual support.

Pupils' behaviour and personal development are good. They know how to keep safe and healthy and the take-up of after-school sports activities is good. The curriculum is satisfactory. Most learning takes place through discrete subject lessons but the school is working towards linking subjects together more imaginatively. Some excellent enrichment is provided through lessons by outside specialists, for example in dance and music. The school provides good pastoral care for all pupils, especially the most vulnerable, and provides effective guidance to all pupils through targets in English and mathematics.

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The headteacher and deputy provide clear direction for school improvement. The school's capacity for sustained improvement is satisfactory. The key issues from the last inspection have been addressed: attendance is now good and marking more helpful. The headteacher and governors have steered the school successfully through a period of substantial staffing difficulties and established a platform of improving teaching. The staff work together well as a team, and are aware of the school's strengths and weaknesses. Improved tracking systems show that progress is more consistent across the school than it was, and that standards are

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beginning to rise.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Develop a more effective creative curriculum that:
 - links subjects together so that pupils improve and use their skills in practical contexts
 - includes planned opportunities for pupils to use their initiative and take more responsibility for their own learning.
- Improve teaching by:
 - ensuring that lessons build on pupils' existing skills more effectively
 - assessing pupils' understanding more closely during lessons and adjusting the level of challenge accordingly
 - ensuring that the majority of lessons are good or better as soon as possible.
- About 40% of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**3**

The lessons and work seen during the inspection confirmed the picture presented by the school's own data. The quality of learning in lessons was typically satisfactory for all groups. Pupils enter the school with broadly average attainment, and make satisfactory overall progress. Standards in Year 6 were seen to be broadly average, but rising. Standards in writing are lower than in reading, an issue that the school has identified and is successfully addressing. Boys and girls achieve equally well over time. More able pupils also make satisfactory overall progress, despite the fact that lessons do not always provide sufficient challenge for them. The very few pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds make similar progress to their peers.

Pupils' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is good. They are confident and enthusiastic learners who enjoy and make the most of any opportunities they are given, for example to refine their music and dance skills under expert tuition. Behaviour is good in school and contributes to pupils' learning. A few pupils expressed concern about occasional incidents of poor behaviour in the playground, but most pupils thought behaviour was good. They undertake various roles such as lunch-time helpers and buddies responsibly, support charities through fundraising and get involved in local events and issues. For example, their campaign to slow down traffic in the vicinity of the school helped to persuade the council to erect warning and advisory signs. Their knowledge and appreciation of the diverse cultures represented in the wider society has improved since the previous inspection and is now satisfactory.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

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Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	3
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	3
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	3
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	3
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	2
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

Recent recruits to the teaching staff provide good models for effective planning of lessons and variety in the methods used to get pupils actively involved in their learning. The good plans indicate exactly what outcomes are expected and the methods used engage the pupils fully. For example, interactions and discussions between pupils and organised movement around the class contributed to good progress in a minority of lessons seen in the inspection. More typically, when less attention was paid to the detail expected in pupils' responses and less imaginative methods used, pupils made slower and less enthusiastic progress. Assessment information is used to set different activities for groups of pupils, but these are not always demanding enough for the more able pupils. Marking has improved since the last inspection and includes more specific guidance. A current topic on the Holocaust has stimulated some good work in English and drama, but the school's moves to improve the curriculum by linking subjects together are at the very early stages of development. Most lessons are planned by subject and taught in isolation from one another, limiting the opportunities pupils have to draw on a range of knowledge and skills to accomplish a task. Good care and guidance is effective in ensuring that pupils are safe in school and know where to go for help if they are in difficulty.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

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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The quality of teaching Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
	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 continues to provide clear leadership, but her efforts to maintain the pace of school improvement have been hampered by staff turnover and absences since the last inspection. The part-time deputy provides good support, especially in accurate monitoring and evaluation of teaching and concerted efforts continue to eradicate remaining weaknesses. Good subject leadership has identified weaknesses in pupils' performance and is helping to raise standards in English and mathematics. Leadership in some other subjects, especially science, is not as effective. The governors give good support to the headteacher and fulfil their statutory duties well. The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures is good with those for the safe recruitment of staff, a model of good practice. However, governors are not always active enough in challenging the school to improve further. The school successfully promotes community cohesion at a local level through its involvement with a number of community initiatives and is highly regarded in the area. National and international links are weaker, but are beginning to be developed, for example through a recently established link with a school in France. Equal opportunity is successfully promoted and the school is vigilant against discrimination.

The school enjoys the confidence and support of parents and keeps them informed about the work of the school. It has established many fruitful partnerships that boost the pupils' learning experiences, for example the provision of specialist mathematics lessons for more able pupils in Year 6. The whole staff and governors share a commitment to the school and determination to continue improving its work.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	3
	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

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 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	3

Early Years Foundation Stage

Strong provision for children in the Nursery and Reception classes is much appreciated and commented on by parents. The lead teacher successfully manages an enthusiastic and competent team. The children make good progress across all the areas of learning. The transition from Nursery to Reception is seamless within the one setting and excellent transition arrangements into Year 1 ensure that all the children experience a positive start to the National Curriculum.

The children choose from a good range of play activities for much of the time that help them learn specific skills relevant to their stage of development. The staff engage with them very effectively to assess their progress and guide them where appropriate. However, some of the learning observed was too teacher-directed, and was not compatible with the school's own evaluation of outstanding for the provision. Adult-led activities such as baking, broaden the children's experiences and develop their social as well as practical skills. Rigorous attention is paid to safety and hygiene. Children are taught to wash their hands before handling food, for example, and doors and gates are securely locked. The outdoor area offers limited space and facilities for learning through play but is used to optimum effect.

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

The parents have positive views of the school. As one parent put it: 'Our school is like an extended family.' Many commented in praise of the provision for children in the Nursery and Reception. Others appreciated the individual help their children received. A few parents thought that bullying was not dealt with effectively. The inspection found no evidence to support this view, and judged behaviour to be good overall.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at The Richard Heathcote Community 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 84 questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 177 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	53	63	29	35	2	2	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	59	70	23	27	1	1	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	42	50	35	42	5	6	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	40	48	36	43	7	8	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	43	51	37	44	3	4	1	1
The school helps me to support my child's learning	42	50	36	43	5	6	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	41	49	38	45	4	5	1	1
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)	35	42	38	45	4	5	1	1
The school meets my child's particular needs	43	51	33	39	7	8	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	38	45	34	40	7	8	2	2
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	33	39	42	50	4	5	2	2
The school is led and managed effectively	40	48	39	46	3	4	2	2
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	50	60	31	37	2	2	1	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 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.



25 January 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of The Richard Heathcote Community Primary School, Stoke-on-Trent, ST7 8BB

My colleagues and I were very impressed with your friendliness and good manners when we visited your school. You were confident and polite when you spoke to us and you helped us get a clear picture of how well your school is doing. We found that you are receiving a satisfactory education. Most of you reach expected standards by the end of Year 6 and enjoy your time in school. You know how to keep safe and try to lead healthy lifestyles through eating well and exercising regularly. You behave well most of the time, especially in class. Those of you who take on responsibilities around the school make a good job of it and the older ones look after the younger ones really well. The staff in the Early Years Foundation Stage make sure children get off to a good start in school.

Your lessons are interesting most of the time and help you to make progress, but some of you could work harder and achieve more. You could also use the skills you are learning in more practical ways. The lessons that are taken by specialist teachers are excellent and develop your skills really well. We have asked the school to do two main things to help you to learn even more successfully. These are to:

- link subjects together in topics and projects so that you develop and use more of your skills in practical ways
- develop teaching so that more lessons are good or outstanding, particularly by making sure that the tasks you are given in lessons make all of you think and work hard.

I wish you and your teachers well for the future.

Yours sincerely

Peter Kerr

Lead inspector

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