

Rookery School & Children's Centre

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	132138
Local Authority	Birmingham
Inspection number	341293
Inspection dates	25–26 May 2010
Reporting inspector	Rodney Braithwaite

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	472
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Geoff Rees
Headteacher	Tracy Stone
Date of previous school inspection	27 February 2007
School address	Rookery Road Handsworth Birmingham
Telephone number	0121 4644221
Fax number	0121 464 4095
Email address	enquiry@rookery.bham.sch.uk

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

T: 08456 404045
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by four additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 21 lessons and observed 18 different teachers. They held meetings with groups of pupils, governors, parents and staff. They observed the school's work, and looked at documentation relating to the attainment and assessment of pupils' progress, school policies, the school's self-evaluation, minutes of governors' meetings and the provision for safeguarding. They also looked at samples of pupils' work and the school development plan. They analysed 128 parent and carer questionnaires and other written responses from pupils and staff.

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

- children's skills on entry to the Nursery, and the extent of their progress in learning in the Early Years Foundation Stage
- the reasons for past low attainment in science, and the effectiveness of measures taken for improvement
- the progress and achievement of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, and pupils in the early stages of learning English, compared with all other pupils
- the development and effectiveness of a practical curriculum for the particular needs of the school's pupils

Information about the school

Rookery is larger than most primary schools. A minority of pupils are of White British heritage and the great majority of pupils come from minority ethnic groups, the largest being those from Indian heritage. A high proportion of pupils are in the early stages of learning English. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is higher than average, with a majority having moderate learning difficulties. The school provides a breakfast club and after school club. The school has a large sports and arts facility on site which is used by both the school and the local community. Since the previous inspection, a new Children's Centre, administered by the school, has opened on the site. This is also used by the school and local community. The school has a number of awards including the International School Award and Activemark.

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

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

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

This is a good school. It is at the heart of a multicultural community where all are welcomed to a warm, caring, safe and happy environment. It is a school always looking to improve, as a governor said, 'We have common goals, and when we reach them, we ask how we can make things even better'. Many parents and carers confirm that the school is always focused on 'getting the best' for their children. The new Children's Centre is an excellent addition to the school's provision. Together with the Sports and Art Centre it greatly enhances the resources not only for the school and its pupils, but also for the needs of the whole local community. This enables the school to make an outstanding contribution to local community cohesion.

The school has many strengths, the most notable being the care and support provided for every learner. This thoroughly inclusive school has an excellent understanding of the personal needs of every pupil, especially pupils whose circumstances make them vulnerable, those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, and the many pupils in the early stages of learning English. A teacher described this perfectly when saying, 'At Rookery, no child is ever forgotten'. Pupils have great eagerness to learn, are proud of their achievements and work well together. They are cheerful and confident, behave well and enthusiastically accept responsibilities, especially if it can help the school and the local community, where they have high involvement. They feel extremely safe, which is strongly supported by parents.

When children begin school in the Nursery they have many barriers to learning, particularly in their language development. They have an exceptional start in the Early Years Foundation Stage and make excellent progress in their learning and personal development. They continue to make good progress and achieve well throughout the main school, so that they attain average levels in English and mathematics at the end of Year 6. This is an improvement in mathematics since the last inspection. This is because teaching is good and at times outstanding in some classes. There is evidence, though, of some inconsistency in teaching. Occasionally some teachers do not use the good assessment information they have in their short term planning. Consequently some pupils find the work too difficult and others are challenged insufficiently to enable them to make consistent progress. However as in all aspects of the management of the school, the school leaders, led strongly by the clear-sighted and determined headteacher, have a very accurate picture of the school's strengths, and areas for improvement. The school's self-evaluation is accurate and clearly identifies the way ahead. Leaders, including a supportive and challenging governing body, have shown a good capacity to improve, particularly through their efforts to raise attainment. This capacity is also reflected in the integration of significant resource centres and the

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continued development of an innovative and stimulating curriculum which gives pupils many memorable experiences. This contributes strongly to the outstanding spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Remove inconsistencies in teaching and learning by:
- modelling and sharing existing good practice in the school in order to make all teaching good or better
 - ensuring that all short term lesson planning includes the use of assessment information about the learning of all pupils.

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

Pupils respond positively in their lessons. They are keen to learn, participate and speak when given the opportunity. They enjoy their learning, describing their experiences as, 'adventurous', 'creative' and even 'magnificent'. Pupils from Year 6 talk about their 'talents and gifts', because 'we all have one or more'. One pupil indicated that, 'I am very good at encouraging people who are lonely or fed-up'. They know the school rules, behave responsibly and respect one another. They take pride in their work, some of which is displayed colourfully throughout the school. Pupils mention 'loads' of adults that they can turn too when they have personal problems. Pupils have healthy lifestyles which are enhanced by the excellent sports facilities of the school, and demonstrated by the school's Activemark award. Attendance, particularly that of older pupils, is above average. Pupils identify rare cases of bullying or challenging behaviour, but say that the staff always deal with these quickly and fairly. Pupils' extremely positive relationships are a strong feature of their excellent personal development.

Over the last few years, pupils' attainment has been broadly average in English and mathematics by the time they leave school. Inspection evidence shows that attainment is steadily rising, especially in the number of pupils reaching above average levels. Pupils' writing is benefiting from good improvement in reading, better speaking skills and many exciting writing opportunities across the curriculum. However, attainment in science has been below average in recent times. The school has taken action in the last year with some success to remedy this weakness, and there is evidence of rising attainment in all years. The progress in learning and achievement of all pupils, mostly from low starting points, as seen in lessons is good. For example, in a Year 6 class, pupils used their existing knowledge to develop their skills of peer assessment and balanced arguments.

Central to pupils' personal development is their excellent contribution to both the school and the local community. They take many responsibilities, for example, as sports mentors, and as members of the Eco-School and Young People's Parliament. Work with 'the pride of Handsworth' and 'Black Voices' has helped their understanding of what it means to be a citizen of the community. Together with pupils' achievements in literacy and numeracy, this is good preparation for their future economic well-being.

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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	1
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	1
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	1

How effective is the provision?

Teaching and learning are good because teachers have good relationships with their pupils, manage classes well and have a good understanding of the needs of pupils. Some teachers are capable of high quality teaching such as that observed in both Year 5 classes, where pupils were encouraged to make a comparative analysis of an absorbing and stimulating book. Challenging activities and skilled questioning are other teaching skills common to good teaching. However, in spite of regular monitoring by leaders, teaching is sometimes inconsistent. Lesson planning does not always use accurate and good quality assessment data to match tasks to the learning needs of all pupils. Although extension activities are sometimes prepared, pupils may not be given early opportunities to face these challenges during the lesson. This results in differences in the progress made by some pupils. Assessment strategies show a clear improvement since the last inspection. Challenging targets are set and known by pupils, and most marking consistently identifies how and what pupils can improve in their learning. The school provides an outstanding curriculum which is creative and imaginative and designed expressly for the pupils in the school. The school makes excellent use of its

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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own and external resources to provide a suitable curriculum for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. In addition it offers many experiences in the arts to pupils with little previous experience or knowledge of them. Pupils have been able to work with professional artists and exhibit their pictures in the City, enjoy a 'Maths Olympiad' and work with the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra. There is a strong global element to the curriculum, which has helped the school to gain the International Award. Pupils have also had opportunities to learn four different languages. A wide range of extra-curricular activities, clubs and visits are popular and well attended. Pupils appreciate these opportunities and talk enthusiastically about their artistic talents. Information and communication technology (ICT), literacy and mathematics are used well across the curriculum.

The school provides a caring and welcoming environment for all pupils. Intervention and support from many teaching assistants is well planned, skilled and meets the needs of all pupils. Provision for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and for pupils with English as an additional language is excellent. Links with many outside agencies are very effective. Provision for safeguarding and child protection is rigorous and regularly reviewed. The breakfast and after school clubs are well managed and offer a good extended service to the school community.

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	1
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher gives a strong lead to the staff in her desire for a continually improving and ambitious school, providing for the many needs of all pupils. An effective team of senior leaders work very closely with the headteacher, and has been responsible for improving provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage, developing the new resource centres successfully and maintaining the existing strengths in the school, especially the personal and social development of pupils. Leaders spend much time rigorously monitoring teaching and learning. This has enabled them to identify both the considerable strengths in teaching, but also inconsistencies. The school recognises that its priorities in this aspect have not yet been fully met. The staff have been guided to become a mutually supportive, motivated team. This ensures that pupils are cared for in an inclusive learning environment, where they have good equal opportunities to participate fully in school, free from discrimination. Governors have improved their contribution to the school. They use their varied talents effectively, share the school's

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ambitions, are very supportive and now have the confidence to challenge leaders. They ensure that there is good provision for safeguarding and that all statutory requirements for health and safety are met.

There is highly effective involvement of parents and carers, who are encouraged to play a full part in the learning and development of their children. They express great appreciation for the many excellent opportunities and initiatives to engage them in the life of the school. Partnerships to promote learning and the well-being of pupils are outstanding and often linked to the provision for community cohesion. This was seen to good effect when pupils from a nearby special school joined the Year 4 pupils to take part in a workshop with the Welsh National Opera. The school has very high involvement with the local community, but also has strong links with other countries, throughout the world such as India and a partner school in Kenya. It has evaluated the impact of its initiatives for community cohesion on pupils' personal development to good effect. The school makes effective use of its resources to promote achievement and gives 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
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	1
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	1
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	1
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Early Years Foundation Stage

Most children enter the Nursery with skills that are well below those expected for their age, especially in language and social skills. A significant number have little knowledge of English. Children settle quickly because of high quality care and support, and rapidly develop an appetite for learning and an understanding of how to behave well and be part of a community. They make excellent progress in their learning and personal

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development, so that for the last two years, many are almost reaching skills expected for their age when they enter Year1. They make especially good progress in developing skills in ICT. Children soon become familiar with school routines, learning quickly how to cooperate, share and develop independent learning skills. This was very noticeable when they learned, in the Forest school, and in the classroom, about minibeasts and 'ugly bugs', talking with amazement about how cocoons change into butterflies. Provision for learning is outstanding, based strongly on excellent assessment, leading to personalised learning for every child. The adaption of an old Victorian building for the needs of these children is highly effective.

High quality teaching and good contributions from teaching assistants, are driven by excellent leadership and management. This ensures that the needs of all children, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities are continually monitored and evaluated. Children's welfare is given the highest priority, and staff ensure that all necessary safeguarding is in place. Staff have excellent relationships with parents, and there are very close and effective links with the Children's Centre. Transition of children into Year1 is well managed, and children enter the main school with boundless confidence.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	1

Views of parents and carers

The great majority of parents and carers who responded to the questionnaire have very positive opinions of the school. They feel that their children are safe, that they enjoy school, and that teaching and leadership and management are good. Typically a parent commented, 'Rookery liaises very closely with parents, families and the community, and I am extremely happy with the education of my child'. A small minority of parents and carers expressed concerns, in particular about how the school takes account of their suggestions and concerns. The inspection team agreed with parents' and carers' positive views and found that the school listens to their concerns, following them up on most occasions to their satisfaction.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Rookery School & Children's Centre 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 128 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 472 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	87	68	39	30	1	1	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	68	53	58	45	1	1	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	72	56	46	36	7	5	1	1
My child is making enough progress at this school	63	49	57	45	6	5	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	71	55	52	41	4	3	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	66	52	53	41	7	5	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	68	53	52	41	4	3	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)	57	45	55	43	9	7	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	50	39	67	52	9	7	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	58	45	59	46	7	5	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	45	35	65	51	15	12	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	59	46	62	48	3	2	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	68	53	54	42	4	3	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

	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
Type of school	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 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.



27 May 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Rookery School & Children's Centre, Birmingham B21 9PY

Your school provides you with a good education. You help to make it a special place for everyone in your school, because you are happy, lively, enjoy learning and are well behaved. We enjoyed meeting you all, and hearing from you about your life in school. I was really impressed with those of you who took me round your amazing playground with the old car and wooden boats.

The team of inspectors think you are very well cared for by the staff, and were very pleased to hear how safe you think you are. We think that when you first start school in Nursery and Reception, you learn really well, and get on well with each other. In the main school, we think you make good progress in your learning and you are improving all the time, especially in science now. You have good teachers and classroom assistants as well as a good headteacher and other leaders who are always trying to help the school in every way. They provide you with many exciting and enjoyable learning activities especially in that wonderful sports hall and arts centre. Now you have the marvellous new Children's Centre as well! No wonder everyone from the area you live in, including your parents and carers, are so proud of the school.

Everyone in the school wants it to improve even more, so we are suggesting how this might be done. We have asked the school leaders to help your teachers become even better, by making sure that all of you are doing work that is not too difficult or too easy. We have suggested that this can be done by making sure that teachers' plans are for the learning of each one of you, so that you can all make good progress.

We are confident that you will try to do your best, and are sure that you will always find that learning is fun in Rookery.

Yours sincerely

Rod Braithwaite

Lead inspector

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