

Rainford CofE Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	104790
Local Authority	St Helens
Inspection number	324103
Inspection dates	2–3 July 2009
Reporting inspector	Stephen Rowland

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

The registered childcare, managed by the governing body, was inspected under section 49 of the Childcare Act 2006.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	257
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	0
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	0
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Allan Jones
Headteacher	Mr Julian Finn
Date of previous school inspection	1 February 2006
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Cross Pit Lane Rainford St Helen's Merseyside WA11 8AJ
Telephone number	01744 883281
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Age group	4–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors.

Description of the school

This is a larger than average primary school. Most pupils come from relatively advantaged social backgrounds. The proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below the national average. Almost all pupils are of White British heritage and none are at an early stage of learning English as an additional language. Since the last inspection a new headteacher has been appointed. The school has the Healthy Schools Award and is just beginning the Enquiry School status.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a good and improving school with some outstanding features. The school has close links with its local community and church and provides a secure and caring environment in which pupils flourish. The school works very hard to ensure that all pupils are given every opportunity to succeed. Parents express strong support for the school and make many positive comments. A typical view is, 'The school is like one big family. There is a caring, welcoming atmosphere.' Pupils describe a strong sense of loyalty and belonging. They value the safe and calm atmosphere and the help they receive from the staff.

Achievement is good. Standards are above the national average in English, mathematics and science. This has been consistently so over recent years. The provisional data for 2009 suggests a strong upward trend, particularly in English, which has been the main focus of the school's work. The quality of teaching is good and pupils work in a calm, supportive environment so that they make good progress. Nevertheless, within this positive picture there is still room for improvement. Occasionally, the teachers do not take advantage of opportunities for pupils to develop independent learning skills. The school is developing effective systems to track progress and to provide useful feedback for pupils. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are given good levels of support and so they make good progress.

Pupils' behaviour is exemplary. They are polite, considerate and supportive of each other. Many pupils gain valuable skills through the responsibilities they take on as the house officials and through the many community and church based activities they participate in. This helps them to become well rounded and mature young citizens. Attendance is excellent, showing how keen pupils are to learn and how much they enjoy coming to school.

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. The school has numerous links with charities and pupils work hard to support them. They develop a clear awareness of other cultures and of their place in the wider world. Pupils are very aware of healthy lifestyles and enjoy the healthy food offered to them in the school canteen and taking part in the regular 'Shake and Wake' sessions. They are also committed to protecting the environment and take great pride in the school's grounds and gardens.

The school's leadership and management are good. The school's leadership team was substantially reorganised since the last inspection and there is a strong sense of shared purpose and direction. The headteacher provides committed leadership which has established a calm and confident environment in which all staff, including those who are less experienced, are enabled to contribute to the school's improvement. The school's self-evaluation is good and the staff have a clear understanding of what the priorities are. However, improvement plans occasionally lack detail and clarity so it can be difficult for the school to see when it has achieved its objectives. Governors have a thorough knowledge of the school and are very active in supporting it. The school has effectively tackled the issues raised at the time of the last inspection. The continuing upward trend in pupils' achievement and the excellent quality of support and care indicate that the school has good capacity to improve further.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Good provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage and effective leadership enables children to become happy and receptive learners. They enter the Reception class with attainment at

levels which are broadly expected and make good progress. Most are working at slightly above the expected level by the beginning of Year 1. Early reading and writing skills are supported through an emphasis on phonics and this is having a positive impact on achievement. The quality of teaching is good and this brings about good learning. However, occasionally, opportunities for children to take responsibility for their own learning are missed. The curriculum provides a good mix of indoor and outdoor activities, which generate a sense of enjoyment and fun. Children interact with each other well and have warm relationships with the caring staff. Arrangements for their welfare are robust and the needs of children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are well supported. Children's progress is observed thoroughly and assessment is systematic so that individual needs are quickly identified and are used to help children make the next steps in their learning. Parents value good communications between home and school and the good care provided for their children. However, these links are not extensive and do not ensure that parents are fully involved in their children's learning. The school does not fully recognise the value of parental input into the process of assessment.

What the school should do to improve further

- Find ways to involve parents of children in the Reception class so they can share information about their child's learning with the school and contribute to their children's learning.
- Make sure that the school's plans to improve are as clear and helpful as they can be so it is clear when the school has achieved its objectives.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Following a good start in the Early Years Foundation Stage, pupils continue to make good progress in Key Stage 1. They achieve standards which are generally above the national average and this has been so for a number of years. The gap between boys' and girls' achievement has narrowed in recent years because of the strategies the school has employed to engage boys in their learning. Progress continues to be good throughout Key Stage 2. The provisional results for 2009 show that the school met its challenging targets. A large proportion of pupils achieved the higher levels in English, mathematics and science. Inspection evidence from lesson observations and work scrutiny shows that progress is good. This is particularly so in writing where the school's 'Big Write' project is succeeding in driving up standards. Attainment in English has improved markedly since the last inspection. Boys and girls achieve equally well in this key stage as do pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. This is due to the good support and guidance they receive.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils' personal development and well-being are outstanding. Pupils are considerate and respectful both to their peers and to adults. Attendance is exemplary. It is consistently well above the national average and there are no instances on record of unauthorised absence. Behaviour is excellent. Pupils stated there was virtually no bullying and that any incidents were dealt with rapidly. Parents stated that they all felt the school was a safe place. Pupils have an excellent awareness of healthy lifestyles. They take part in many activities to promote physical exercise such as the 'walking bus' and the numerous extra-curricular sports and clubs. All Year 6 pupils take part in an annual health conference. The school's Christian ethos helps to foster children's spiritual development. Cultural awareness is fostered through visitors from different

backgrounds such as the Ghanaian musician and the Rastafarian rap poet. Pupils contribute extremely well to the life of the school and the local community. Older pupils are, for example, elected to senior positions within the four houses. The school council plays an active role in decision making. The playground has been improved with better equipment as a result of their work. Children are proud of the support they give to local charities. Responsibilities such as running the tuck shop and discussing class rules help pupils to develop the skills and qualities that they will need in adult life.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning is good with some outstanding practice. In the best lessons, planning is thorough and demonstrates a good understanding of what pupils have achieved and how they need to progress. As a result the level of work is appropriately challenging. There is a sense of pace and purpose so that pupils' engagement and enjoyment do not flag and learning is brisk. The purpose of the lesson is made clear and is continually referred to so that pupils are aware of what they are learning and why. For example, in a lesson preparing for a writing task, pupils enjoyed competing with each other to construct the most engaging and interesting sentences and to find the most eye-catching vocabulary. Teaching assistants and other voluntary helpers, of which there are many, are employed effectively and contribute to the pupils' learning. Information and communication technology is used to good effect. In a few instances, pupils were not allowed to take responsibility for their learning so their independent learning skills were not fully developed.

The use of assessment to support good learning is developing. In some lessons, feedback is detailed and supportive and truly enables pupils to see how they can make their work even better. Pupils value and respond to this. Occasionally, feedback is not as well developed, so that pupils do not fully understand how to improve their work and so their progress is not as strong.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

Curriculum provision is good. It is broad and balanced and meets statutory requirements. It meets the needs of all pupils and has concentrated particularly on the development of literacy skills during this school year. The 'Big Write' project has led to an improvement overall in standards of writing. Pupils particularly enjoy project work. Year 3 pupils said how much they enjoyed their work on local history, which was helping them to have a greater appreciation of Rainford's past. Subject leaders are beginning to contribute to the development of an engaging and enjoyable curriculum, although their expertise and energy is yet to be fully used. All pupils have the opportunity to learn Spanish from Year 2. Citizenship is taught through the personal, social and health education programme with special themed days such as the Spanish day. There is a particularly rich variety of extra-curricular activities, which are well supported. A high proportion of pupils take the opportunity to learn to play a musical instrument and enjoy playing for their friends at lunchtime. There are numerous visits and visitors, which enrich the curriculum, and annual residential experiences for Year 2 and Year 6 pupils.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Provision for the care, guidance and support of pupils is good with some excellent features. Staff respond rapidly and effectively to ensure that all pupils are happy in school and are enabled to learn. Support for vulnerable pupils and those who are experiencing difficulties is particularly strong. Extensive care and guidance is provided for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities so that they make at least as good progress as their peers. Links with external agencies are close and this enhances provision. Links with other schools are extensive and this particularly ensures a happy transfer to the secondary phase.

All safeguarding policies and procedures are in place, including those which relate to the suitability of adults who work with pupils and those to ensure the health and safety of pupils. These fully meet current government requirements. Systems to track and support the academic progress of pupils are developing. These are beginning to have an impact on pupils' learning.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The school is well led and managed. A recently reorganised senior leadership team supports the effective headteacher. The school shares a sense of purpose and determination to improve, which is evident at all levels. Increasingly, less experienced members of staff are developing skills to lead and manage aspects of the school's work. This is having a positive impact and is allowing all staff to feel that they have an important role to play. Challenging targets are being used effectively and this is leading to continuing improvement in pupils' achievement and standards.

Self-evaluation is detailed. The school has a good understanding of its strengths and areas for development and is using its self-evaluation to secure improvement. Planning, however, is not always sufficiently rigorous and lacks clear timescales and outcomes. The school is aware of its responsibility to promote community cohesion and has employed a broad range of strategies for this purpose. Many of these are effective in helping pupils to value and respect others. However, the school has not fully evaluated the impact of this aspect of its work. The school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination extremely well so that all groups of pupils achieve well and feel safe. The governing body has a very good knowledge of the school and provides good challenge and support. It is very active in the school and has developed assigned roles in supporting aspects of the school's work, such as target-setting. Finances and resources are managed well.

Annex A

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well being?	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	2
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	2
How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	2
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	2
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	2
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress	2

¹Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average to below average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Personal development and well-being

How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	1
The behaviour of learners	1
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	1
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

Thank you for making me and the other inspectors so welcome at your school. We enjoyed our visit and were very impressed by your excellent manners and hospitality. Rainford C of E Primary is a good school with some outstanding features. Some of the things we thought were very good included:

- the good progress you make in your learning
- how much you enjoyed the 'Big Write' sessions
- how well the adults in the school looked after you
- the great variety of clubs and activities you can take part in
- how enjoyable the 'Posh Nosh' lunch was
- your close links with the church and the local Rainford community.

We asked your school to do two things to make it even better.

- Find ways to involve parents of children in the Reception class so they can share information about their child's learning with the school and contribute to their children's learning.
- Make sure that the school's plans to improve are as clear and helpful as they can be.