

Rivenhall Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	115105
Local Authority	Essex
Inspection number	357698
Inspection dates	13–14 July 2011
Reporting inspector	Judith Straw

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	90
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mike Hope
Headteacher	Gillian Holmes
Date of previous school inspection	7 July 2008
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. The inspectors visited eight lessons taught by five teachers. They held meetings with parents and carers, groups of pupils, staff and members of the governing body. They observed the school's work, and looked at documentation including the school development plan, policies and procedures, teachers' lesson plans, assessment and tracking data and the work in pupils' books. The 49 questionnaire responses from parents and carers were analysed as well as responses from pupils and staff.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at a number of key areas.

- How well pupils' reading and writing skills are improving, and how well pupils are making use of their literacy skills in other subjects.
- The effectiveness of the school's promotion of attendance.
- The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation procedures and the contribution all leaders make to school improvement.

Information about the school

The school is much smaller than average, situated in a rural area. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is below average. Almost all pupils come from a White British heritage. The overall percentage of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is average, but the percentage with a statement of special educational needs is well above average.

The school has gained a number of awards including Healthy school status, the Sports Active Mark and International School 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

Rivenhall is a good school where pupils thrive in a nurturing environment and every pupil is valued as an individual. Pupils say they enjoy coming to school and feel safe and secure. Parents and carers are unanimous that their children are safe and the large majority are supportive of the school.

Children start with skills that are broadly at the levels expected for their age. By the time they reach Year 6 attainment is above average in mathematics and reading and average in writing. Attainment overall is rising across the school. All groups of pupils, such as girls and boys, and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, make good progress and achieve well. Initiatives employed by the school have accelerated pupils' progress and improved mathematics and progress in Key Stage 1 so that these areas are no longer weaknesses. Progress in writing is not as strong as in reading. Teaching is good, although occasionally pupils are passive and rely too much on their teachers. Assessment information is used well to identify pupils who need extra support and help. Marking is regular and encouraging and provides pupils with advice on how to improve the content of their work, but books are often untidily presented and errors in spelling and punctuation are not always corrected.

The school is a vibrant, stimulating and secure learning environment. Behaviour is good and relationships are positive. The school has improved attendance so that it is now above average. A thoughtfully designed curriculum provides for pupils' personal development and basic skills well. A striking feature is the way that the school exploits to the full the natural environment. Staff, pupils and their parents and carers have created a beautiful garden and wildlife area and teachers use a local woodland for lessons with the youngest children. Pupils have a good understanding of how to stay healthy and are happy to take on responsibilities within their school community. The school takes good care of its pupils and has a proven track record of helping pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities to make the best of their education.

At the heart of the school's good progress are the vision and drive of the headteacher. All staff share her ambition. The impact of good leadership is seen in the continuous improvement in achievement, attainment and attendance. The governing body is committed and supportive. Good partnerships with parents and carers, support agencies and local schools enhance provision. Consequently the school has a good capacity for continuing improvement.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise attainment in writing by:
 - setting higher expectations for the presentation of pupils' work

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- improving pupils' spelling and punctuation skills.
- Accelerate the pace of learning in lessons by:
 - making sure pupils are actively involved in learning right from the start of each lesson
 - encouraging pupils to take more responsibility for their own learning.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Pupils are attentive in lessons, listen to adults and to each other and work well in groups or in pairs. Occasionally the pace slackens because individual pupils work more slowly unless prompted by an adult. Most pupils persevere when faced with challenging questions and enjoy their learning. For example, Year 5 and 6 pupils worked hard when looking at the ways in which authors use similes and metaphors and trying to work out extra hidden meaning in the texts they were reading. Classroom routines are well established and pupils respond well to their teachers' high expectations for good behaviour. Pupils achieve well in a range of subjects including music, information and communication technology, art and the humanities.

Pupils say that occasional instances of bullying are promptly dealt with. Pupils have a thorough understanding of healthy living and many enjoy working in the school garden, which grows a remarkable variety of fruit and vegetables that are often used in the school kitchen. All pupils regularly enjoy sport and some cycle or use scooters to come to school. Achieving International School status has broadened children's horizons so that they have contact with schools in Angola, France, Romania and China. The school council organises international days such as the recent 'French day' and also takes responsibility for many fund-raising activities, both locally in the village and further afield. The school benefits from strong links with the local church and many pupils enjoy attending 'church club'.

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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	2
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	2
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low

How effective is the provision?

Lessons are typically planned well to provide a range of stimulating activities. Teachers use questions effectively to check pupils' understanding and encourage them further in their learning. Teachers are particularly skilled in pitching work at the right level for the different ages and ability ranges in their classes. This helps to ensure that pupils with a statement of special educational needs, for example, are well supported and can access all aspects of the curriculum. Just occasionally, pupils are kept listening for too long to introductory sessions and are not actively involved right from the start of the lesson. Teaching assistants are well prepared and skilled in ensuring that different groups of pupils make good progress. Occasionally some pupils become too reliant on the support of adults and are less happy working on their own. Marking is constructive in helping pupils to improve their thinking and use of vocabulary, but not enough emphasis is put on the importance of accuracy in writing and the value of good presentation.

The school has adopted a cross-curricular and creative approach to the curriculum, enabling pupils to see the links between subjects and to reinforce their key skills. This is providing pupils with many opportunities to use numeracy and literacy skills in a range of different contexts, and they regularly write at length in a number of different subjects. The thematic approach has helped to raise attainment in mathematics and information and communication technology. Attainment in science has improved because of the practical approach taken and emphasis on direct observation and problem-solving. The

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international dimension gives pupils a good understanding of communities in other parts of the world. All pupils learn French. The curriculum is further enhanced by a wide range of clubs, after-school activities, visits and visitors, including regular residential and outward bound courses. The curriculum is effective in supporting pupils' personal development.

Good care, especially for pupils whose circumstances make them potentially vulnerable, is a hallmark of this school. A series of effective partnerships enables the school to support pupils and their families. Transition arrangements ensure pupils are well prepared to move easily into and out of school and between classes. Individual learning programmes ensure that pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress.

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	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher has a very clear vision for Rivenhall which is shared by all the adults who work there. Leaders and managers at all levels are effective in promoting equality of opportunity, tackling discrimination and giving all pupils the opportunity to achieve well. For example, effective action has narrowed the gap between boys and girls' achievement. The leadership and management of teaching and learning are good, with all staff involved in observing their colleagues and helping to improve provision. A rigorous tracking system ensures that the rate of progress of every individual pupil is monitored and staff are held accountable for the progress pupils make in each class. Together the headteacher and class teachers ensure that appropriate steps are taken to support pupils in danger of falling behind. The school has a good awareness of its strengths and areas still to improve, such as the weakness in promoting pupils' achievement in writing.

The governing body is knowledgeable about the school's work. Its members support the school effectively, and are fully involved in holding it to account and challenging it to do even better. Safeguarding arrangements are good. There is a good understanding by all adults of how to keep pupils safe and training is regular. Pupils are confident that they are safe and their parents and carers agree. The school's measures to promote community cohesion are good. The school is an important feature of the village community and is regularly involved in supporting local events. Successful links with many other schools, some of which are overseas, ensure that pupils develop a good awareness of different beliefs and cultures.

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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	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	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

Very good induction arrangements help children to settle quickly in to school life. Good relationships rapidly develop between children and adults. These, together with a safe and secure learning area, mean that children feel confident to learn. Staff work closely as a team to provide a host of well-planned and relevant learning experiences for children. The good-quality learning environment provides many good practical opportunities for pupils to learn in a range of situations. For example, every fortnight on 'Welly Wednesday' the whole Reception class enjoy learning in a local woodland where they are encouraged to understand and respect the natural environment and enjoy a full range of activities. In an outstanding woodland lesson during the inspection children enjoyed making willow lanterns, playing 'giants and fairies' and looking at different trees and leaves. Children are able to make their own choices as well as working under the guidance of an adult. Good teaching and effective leadership and management mean that children learn at a good pace and make good progress in all the areas of learning. Adults record and assess pupils' progress well and the resulting information is used to plan the next steps for each child. Parents and carers are kept fully informed about day-to-day activities and progress in a learning diary and are welcome to come into school to discuss problems or issues at any time. The current priority for improvement is to further develop the outside learning area and to accelerate children's progress in communication and language skills.

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

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 proportion of parents and carers who returned the questionnaire outlining their views of the school was above average for a primary school. The large majority were positive about all aspects of the school's work, praising in particular the friendly and hard-working staff and the family atmosphere. A small minority expressed individual concerns about bullying and attainment, especially in writing. The inspection team found that the few examples of inappropriate behaviour are being effectively addressed and managed by the school, and that attainment has risen steadily in both key stages and progress is accelerating. The school acknowledges that standards in writing are not rising as quickly as in other areas.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Rivenhall Church of England Voluntary Controlled 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 49 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 90 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	28	57	16	33	5	10	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	24	49	24	49	0	0	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	12	24	32	65	3	6	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	18	37	21	43	8	16	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	16	33	29	59	4	8	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	17	35	24	49	3	6	1	2
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	18	37	25	51	4	8	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)	10	20	26	53	8	16	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	16	33	27	55	4	8	1	2
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	12	24	21	43	11	22	4	8
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	14	29	23	47	7	14	4	8
The school is led and managed effectively	13	27	24	49	5	10	3	6
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	21	44	23	51	3	6	1	2

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 all 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	46	48	6	0
Primary schools	6	47	40	7
Secondary schools	12	39	38	11
Sixth forms	13	42	41	3
Special schools	28	49	19	4
Pupil referral units	14	45	31	10
All schools	10	46	37	7

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 are for the period 1 September 2010 to 31 December 2010 and are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 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.

Sixth form figures reflect the judgements made for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

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:	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. ■ 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.



15 July 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Rivenhall Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School, Witham, CM8 3PQ

Thank you for making my colleague and I so welcome when we visited your school last week. It was a pleasure to see you in class and to talk to you about your work and interests. I really enjoyed your singing in assembly and watching the Reception class have their 'Welly Wednesday' lesson.

Yours is a good school where you make good progress and achieve well. Your behaviour, awareness of healthy living, respect for the natural environment, contribution to your local community and understanding of people's lives in other parts of the world are all good. You told us that you feel safe and we saw how well the adults in school look after you. You are becoming thoughtful and considerate young people.

You make good progress because your teachers give you interesting things to do and you usually try your best. We found that the adults in the school know what needs to be done to improve your progress even more and we have made two suggestions. First, we noticed that some of you can be a little slow in starting work unless adults are actually standing over you, so we want teachers to make sure you are busy right from the start of lessons. Second, some of you produce neat and well-presented work, but this is not the case with everyone. We have asked your teachers to make sure you correct spelling and other mistakes, so that your written work is the best you can make it. We are very pleased to see that your attendance is now above average.

We wish you all success in the future.

Yours sincerely

Judith Straw

Lead inspector

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