

Rack House School

Yarmouth Drive, Northern Moor, Wythenshawe, Manchester, Lancashire, M23 0BT

Inspection dates 7–8 October 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Early years provision		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Teaching is good. As a result, pupils make good progress in lessons and over time.
- By the end of Year 6, attainment in mathematics and reading is above average and in writing it is broadly average. Pupils' progress from their various starting points is good overall.
- Carefully tailored support for pupils with special educational needs, pupils at the early stages of learning English and disadvantaged pupils enable these pupils to make good progress and to participate fully in activities.
- Children make good progress in the early years provision as a result of good teaching and an exciting environment which engages their interest and encourages them to learn through play.
- Behaviour is good and attendance has improved to above average. Pupils have positive attitudes, enjoy coming to school and have good relationships with each other and with adults. They feel safe in school.
- Leadership and management are good. The headteacher, strongly supported by the deputy headteacher and governors, provides very clear direction. In the very short time the headteacher has been in post he has gained an accurate understanding of what needs to be done to improve the school and has gained the respect of staff, pupils and parents alike.
- Good promotion of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development enables them to thrive in a supportive learning community.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Teaching is not yet outstanding. Work is not always precisely enough matched to pupils' needs and capabilities so that some pupils, particularly the most able, do not always achieve their full potential.
- Pupils are not always given the precise guidance they need to improve their work, particularly their writing and the accuracy of their spelling.
- Pupils are not always given enough opportunity to develop their speaking and listening skills, and this in turn slows their progress in writing, particularly in Key Stage 1 and Years 3 and 4. Children with little or no English make slower progress when they first join the school because strategies to support them in acquiring a working knowledge of English are not fully developed.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 18 lessons and made short visits to other activities, such as guided reading, phonics (letters and their sounds) lessons and small group and one-to-one interventions led by teachers and trained assistants. Visits were also made to the resourced unit. Three of these observations were carried out jointly with the headteacher.
- Two groups of pupils met with inspectors. Discussions were also held with staff, including senior leaders. Meetings were conducted with the Chair of the Governing Body and with a representative from the local authority.
- Inspectors took account of 27 responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) and letters from parents and carers, as well as 27 responses to the staff questionnaire.
- Inspectors scrutinised pupils' work with the headteacher and read a range of documents. These included documents about the school's strategies to enable leaders to gain an accurate view of its performance, school improvement plans, pupils' current progress, policies and records on safeguarding, behaviour and attendance.

Inspection team

Judith Tolley, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Craig Richardson	Additional Inspector
Hilary Ward	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Rack House Primary School is a larger than average-sized primary school which is rapidly increasing in size.
- The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups is above average. The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is lower than average but increasing.
- The proportion of pupils supported by pupil premium funding (additional funding for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and those looked after by the local authority) is much higher than that usually found at more than twice the national average.
- The proportion of pupils supported at school action is much higher than average. The proportion supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is higher than average but varies from year to year.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Since the previous inspection there have been changes in staff; several new teachers have joined the school. The headteacher took up post in September 2014.
- The school has a resourced unit which caters for seven pupils with special educational needs for speech and language and autism.
- The early years provision consists of a Nursery which is both full and part time, and Reception classes which are full time.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching so that it is consistently outstanding across the school and thereby raise standards and further increase pupils' rates of progress, particularly in writing, by:
 - increasing the opportunities pupils have, from the outset, to practise their speaking and listening skills
 - making sure tasks are always set at just the right level to challenge pupils, especially the most able, to achieve the best they can
 - making sure pupils are always given precise guidance about how to improve their work, particularly their writing and the accuracy of their spelling
 - developing effective strategies to support pupils who have little or no English in acquiring a working knowledge of the language swiftly.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are good

- Although the headteacher has been in post for a very short time, he has an accurate view of what the school does well and what needs to be improved. This evaluation is based upon rigorous monitoring procedures, both in terms of the quality of teaching and the progress pupils make.
- He has acted swiftly and decisively to improve the quality of teaching and learning. Regular and rigorous monitoring procedures effectively hold teachers to account and identify training needs.
- Pupil premium funding is used to good effect to support disadvantaged pupils. As a result, gaps in the performance of disadvantaged pupils have closed. Similarly, sports funding is used to good effect to improve the quality of teaching in physical education across the school. This has led to increased participation rates in extra-curricular and sports activities across the school.
- Subject leaders are involved in the school's self-evaluation and school improvement planning procedures as well as driving improvement in their subjects across the wider curriculum. They are also fully involved in working together to plan the new curriculum.
- The curriculum is broad and balanced, meets pupils' needs and aspirations well and prepares them well for citizenship in modern Britain. It enables them not only to practise their mathematical, reading and writing skills in a variety of contexts but also enables them to develop their expertise as historians, scientists and geographers. It is enriched by sport, music, drama and Spanish. Pupils also benefit from regular trips and visits which extend their learning beyond the classroom.
- The teaching of reading is effective and children enjoy their reading. They read fluently and with understanding, being able to explain in detail what they have read in a variety of texts and to make inferences.
- Safeguarding procedures are robust and meet government requirements.
- The school works closely with parents and actively encourages them to be involved in the school's work and their children's learning through regular meetings, newsletters and the school website.
- The school is committed to ensuring all pupils have an equal opportunity and to this end works well with outside agencies to remove barriers to learning. It fosters good relations and provides support and counselling for both parents and pupils three days a week through Place2Be. The school and the home-school link worker have worked closely with families whose children do not attend regularly enough. As a result, over the last year attendance has improved.
- The school has received good support from the local authority through the appointment of an interim leadership team which worked closely with the current headteacher prior to taking up his post in September. As a result, the headteacher was able to gain an accurate understanding of the performance of the school and so has been able to act swiftly to improve the school further.
- **The governance of the school:**
The governing body has a good understanding of the school's strengths and areas which need to be improved. Its members regularly check the school's performance, including data that show pupils' standards of attainment and progress. They are able to talk confidently about how the school has narrowed gaps in the performance of different groups through successful intervention. They have recruited members with a broad range of expertise. They have a clear understanding of the quality of teaching and the performance of staff, including how good performance is rewarded and any underperformance is tackled. The efficiency of spending is scrutinised closely; for example, the effectiveness of the use of primary sports funding and of pupil premium funding. Governors are actively involved in the life of the school and have strong, positive relationships with senior leaders. As a result, they are able, through challenge and support, to hold leaders to account. They have supported the school very effectively during a period of considerable change and ensured the school has remained stable and maintained its high standards.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils are courteous and considerate to each other, and work and play very well together. They take responsibility very seriously and are proud of their contribution to the school, for example as school councillors and as playground leaders.

- Pupils come to lessons equipped and ready to work. They take pride in their school and take care of their classrooms and playground. They work responsibly and with enthusiasm. They support each other well; for example when working with a partner. They listen carefully to others and respect each other's views.
- Pupils have very positive attitudes towards their learning, are keen to do well and, when given the opportunity, enter into a dialogue with their teachers about how to improve their work. When teachers' expectations about the presentation and accuracy of their written work are high, pupils respond very positively, but this is not always the case. Their concentration sometimes flags when activities are too easy or too difficult.
- Pupils who may have challenging behaviour are supported very effectively to make good choices and, as a result, they are able to learn effectively and make good progress alongside their classmates. Incidences of poor behaviour are very rare.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good.
- Pupils have very good relationships with adults. Pupils feel safe and are confident that any poor behaviour is dealt with promptly and effectively. They are aware of the different forms of bullying, such as name-calling and cyber-bullying that can take place and know how to deal with it.
- Pupils know how to stay safe and have a good understanding of the importance of a healthy lifestyle. They enjoy using the equipment in the playground. They are enthusiastic about the wide range of extra-curricular activities, including sport, that are provided and which have a positive impact on their health and well-being.

The quality of teaching

is good

- Teaching is typically good across the school and there are examples of outstanding practice.
- Whole-class, group and paired activities effectively increase pupils' confidence and their speaking skills. When pupils work in groups and pairs to share ideas and to solve problems their confidence and independence increases, but opportunities are sometimes missed for pupils to work in this way or for them to explain their thinking in full. As a result, pupils are not always as confident as they might be in speaking and explaining their ideas to others or in expressing their ideas in writing.
- Teachers and teaching assistants work well together and ask pupils searching questions to see how much they have understood. They provide pupils with practical activities which enable them to experience things for themselves and discuss ideas with a partner. For example, Year 3 pupils made swift progress with their work on life in the Stone Age because activities allowed them to do research and experience things such as painting with primitive tools or re-enacting the discovery of cave paintings in Lascaux for themselves.
- Clear demonstrations coupled with very effective questioning enabled Year 6 pupils to understand how to tackle a variety of problems involving balanced equations and rapidly become confident in putting their own calculations down on paper. Activities were very well matched to pupils' capabilities so that they were all able to make swift progress. However, this is not always the case. On occasions, pupils find tasks too easy or too difficult because work is not always precisely matched to their capabilities.
- Pupils' work is marked regularly and there are examples of outstanding practice. Where this is the case information about pupils' progress determines next steps for individual pupils and this feeds directly into lesson planning. Pupils respond very positively to this and, when this is the case, they maintain a dialogue with teachers about what they need to do next and are given extra challenges to complete, including in subjects other than mathematics and English. However, marking and advice is not always to this high standard. Pupils do not always receive the specific guidance they need to help them improve their work, particularly their writing and the accuracy of their spelling.
- Reading is taught effectively and even the youngest take pleasure in applying their knowledge of phonics to read and write words and simple sentences or read out what they have written. The recently introduced arrangements for teaching mathematics where mental mathematics precedes the main lesson and for reading where guided reading and phonics precede English lessons are effective because pupils are able to apply new learning straight away.
- The impact of teaching on pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Pupils have frequent opportunities to increase their understanding of cultures other than their own.

The achievement of pupils

is good

- The proportion of pupils making and exceeding the progress expected of them from their starting points compares favourably with national figures. Children enter Year 1 with skills and knowledge that are generally below those typical for their age and are confident learners who are well prepared for the Key Stage 1 curriculum.
- Overall, pupils make good progress from their individual starting points. By the end of Year 6, standards in mathematics and reading are above average and in writing they are broadly average.
- Work seen during the inspection indicates that pupils make consistently good progress as they move through the school. Their progress is slower in writing during Key Stage 1 and in Years 3 and 4 because they are not always given the guidance they need to improve their work or the accuracy of their handwriting or spelling.
- The most able pupils usually make good progress from their starting points in mathematics, reading and writing, with some reaching the highest levels by the end of Year 6. However, there is scope to provide even more challenge for these pupils.
- By the end of Year 6 pupils write effectively for a variety of purposes and audiences, and use a good range of vocabulary and structures.
- Progress in reading is good. Pupils are taught phonics (letters and the sounds they make) effectively and are able to apply their knowledge in reading and writing.
- Pupils of all ages are enthusiastic about their reading. By the end of Year 6, most pupils read a variety of texts with a good level of fluency and understanding. Most are able to talk in detail about what they have read and can talk about books they have enjoyed.
- Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs make the same good progress as their peers as a result of the extra help they are given, according to need, in class and in groups. Pupils in the resourced unit also make good progress because of the support they receive which is tailored very well to meet their needs. As a result of this, they are also able to learn effectively in whole-class activities. Pupils who are at the early stages of learning English make good progress because of the extra help they receive. However, there is scope to support them more effectively in extending their vocabulary and developing their confidence in speaking.
- The extra support, such as extra help in the classroom and support from teaching assistants that the school provides with the additional funding for disadvantaged pupils, enables these pupils to reach their targets and to make the same good progress as their peers. Gaps between the attainment of these pupils in English and mathematics and their classmates have closed. In English and mathematics the attainment of disadvantaged pupils was above the national average while in comparison to their classmates in school their attainment was approximately one term behind.
- They reach the same standards as other pupils in the school and higher standards than disadvantaged pupils nationally.

The early years provision

is good

- Children make good progress and achieve well in the Nursery and Reception classes as a result of consistently good teaching. Many children start in the early years provision with skills that are well below those typical for their age, particularly in language and communication. Many also begin school with little or no English.
- Because of well-established routines and effective procedures for making sure their transition from home or pre-school settings is a smooth one, children settle in quickly and behave well. They clearly enjoy the activities planned for them, take turns and learn and play well together.
- The provision is led and managed well. Adults work together very effectively to ensure all children are able to make good progress. They monitor individual progress closely on a daily basis and use this information effectively to plan next steps for children's learning. They take every opportunity to engage children in conversation and to extend their learning. However, children with little or no English make slower progress because of their lack of understanding. Although adults ensure they can join in activities, strategies to help them acquire key language quickly are not yet developed fully.
- Activities are planned very well and designed to interest and encourage children to take the initiative and to help them to develop their skills. Activities are purposeful, change regularly and reflect themes in teaching and children's interests. Children clearly enjoy their learning and are absorbed in activities. The outdoor area is used well and provides lots of opportunities which excite children's interest to explore and investigate; this they do with enthusiasm.

What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	105448
Local authority	Manchester
Inspection number	448281

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	332
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Ken Ashberry
Headteacher	Darren Amesbury
Date of previous school inspection	1 October 2009
Telephone number	0161 998 2544
Fax number	0161 945 8735
Email address	admin@rackhouse.manchester.sch.uk

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