



Roach Vale Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 114823
Local Authority ESSEX
Inspection number 290046
Inspection date 13 November 2006
Reporting inspector Alison Pangbourne

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Roach Vale
School category	Community		Parsons Heath, Colchester
Age range of pupils	4-11		Essex CO4 3YN
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01206 861324
Number on roll (school)	191	Fax number	01206 869751
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Mr John Elliott
		Headteacher	Mrs Serena Williams
Date of previous school inspection	17 June 2002		

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

The school is smaller than average. It is situated within a small estate of private and housing association properties. It is adjacent to two large council housing estates from which it draws over 80% of its pupils. There is some social disadvantage in the area. Most pupils come from White British families with a few from minority ethnic backgrounds. None are at an early stage of learning English. The attainment of most children on starting school is well below average, particularly in language skills. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities is below average. The proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals is above average.

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 school. Parents are very positive and one wrote, 'I wouldn't want my children to go anywhere else.' The pupils endorse this by saying, 'This is a kind school with good teachers.'

Pupils' personal development is good. They become confident and independent because they receive such good care and support. Their behaviour is good and they are polite and friendly to visitors. The older pupils play an excellent part in the day-to-day running of the school, leading assemblies and taking on responsibilities. The excellent emphasis on healthy eating means that pupils know why a balanced diet is important.

Pupils enjoy the good curriculum with its broad range of visits to interesting places and an unusually wide range of out of school activities. There is good provision for pupils with learning difficulties and those with specific talents. This has a positive effect on the progress these pupils make.

Pupils throughout the school make good progress and achieve well. Again, a parent wrote 'We are 100% happy with every aspect of our child's education and she is coming on in leaps and bounds!' Children get off to a good start in the Reception class. Although few of them reach the expected standards by the beginning of Year 1 they do well in relation to their starting points. In recent years, standards have been generally below average by the end of Year 2 with those in writing and mathematics being particularly low. However, standards are slowly rising. This is reflected in the greater number of pupils who reached the higher levels in the 2006 national tests than in previous years.

Pupils continue to achieve well as they move through the school and by the end of Year 6 standards are broadly average. Standards in writing remain below those in reading. Poorly developed speaking skills mean that many pupils find it hard to express their thoughts and ideas in writing or to explain their level of understanding in mathematics. This adversely affects standards. However, over the last few years, standards have been slowly rising. Most pupils, including those with learning difficulties and those of average or above average ability reach the targets set for them, but the school has identified a small group of pupils who are not on course to reach the levels expected for their ages and it is closely monitoring and evaluating their progress so that appropriate actions can be taken to help them improve.

Pupils achieve well because teaching and learning are good. Activities are well matched to their needs and support staff are used effectively to give extra help, particularly in the development of social, language and coordination skills. Staff work very well as a team in this small school, sharing information to ensure each pupil's well-being.

The school's success is due to collective good leadership and management. The headteacher and her deputy provide very good leadership, continually striving for improvement and successfully leading the staff forward. Governance is good. Senior teachers have an accurate view of the school and work well together to bring about improvements. Good teamwork is raising standards. For example, the school has rightly

identified that improving pupils' speaking skills is the key to raising standards, particularly in writing and mathematics. New ways of teaching have been tried, resulting in higher standards than at the time of the previous inspection. Value for money is good and the school has a good capacity to improve further.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that the needs of the small number of pupils identified as not being on track to reach their targets in writing and mathematics are met.
- Develop pupils' speaking skills to promote greater achievement in writing and mathematics.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Children make good progress in the Reception class because they are well taught. There are interesting things for them to do which motivates them to learn. Staff place great emphasis on developing children's social and language skills which are very poorly developed when they first start school. Nevertheless, few reach the expected standards by the beginning of Year 1.

Pupils' achievement is good through Years 1 to 6. This is reflected in the national test results which show that each year standards are getting closer to the average. In 2006 the Year 2 assessments for 2006 were still below national averages in reading and mathematics and well below in writing, but they show that pupils have made considerable gains in relation to their entry levels. National test results for Year 6 in 2006 were broadly average. They were average in English and science and just below in mathematics. Within English, standards in writing were below average but those in reading were average. These results reflect inspection findings which indicate that standards are improving as pupils move through the school and they make good progress.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Most pupils behave well and thoroughly enjoy school. A few find it hard to meet the high standard of behaviour expected and their actions sometimes distract other from their work. Attendance is above average. The older pupils make an excellent contribution to the school community. For example, each week, Year 6 pupils introduce a theme to a group of younger pupils. They then plan an assembly and present it to their group later in the week. Year 6 pupils also plan and cook a healthy lunch and invite an adult from the school to join them. This contributes positively to their social skills and to their excellent understanding of healthy living. They develop good spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness through the caring ethos and the good opportunities to learn about their own and other cultures. They know how to stay safe and their sound basic skills equip them well for their future lives.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teachers have high expectations and pupils respond well to the challenges set for them. One pupil said 'The teachers teach in a fun way so you can remember things' and this sums it up well. Throughout the school, teachers help pupils to achieve the targets set for them. The care taken over setting appropriate targets and monitoring progress towards meeting them has led to the identification of some underachievement in writing and mathematics by a small number of pupils. Teachers take every opportunity to develop pupils' social and oral skills. For example, pupils are given time to discuss their work with a partner, and support assistants help pupils to talk through social issues which affect them. 'Gym trail', led by talented teaching assistants, helps develop hand-eye coordination and skills in concentration for those pupils who need it. Interesting mathematical questions on display encourage pupils to think about mathematical problems and work out solutions. Thorough assessment means that tasks are generally well matched to the needs of pupils. The school is actively encouraging pupils to evaluate their own work so that pupils can take more responsibility for their learning. This good practice, although not yet firmly embedded in all classes, is contributing to the development of pupil's life skills and preparing them well for the next stage in their educational career.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The wide range of visits, visitors and out of school activities make learning interesting and encourage pupils to develop skills in activities such as gardening, batik and singing. The school is currently moving towards basing its curriculum on themes, making sure that all the required elements of the National Curriculum are included and that skills are taught systematically. Literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology skills are developed well in other subjects and this contributes well to the school's work on improving standards. There is a strong emphasis on developing social and personal skills as many pupils need support to deal with their emotions. There is good provision for pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities and for the more able. There is scope for greater emphasis on speaking and listening across all subjects so that pupils can learn to communicate even more effectively.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The school's caring ethos means that the pupils and their parents feel valued. A parent writes 'The school listens to and respects every individual's circumstances and helps if it can.' The parents' satisfaction with the school is reflected in the majority who choose to send their children to Roach Vale when they could choose a closer school. Procedures for safeguarding pupils are rigorous and staff are well trained in child

protection. The school's caring ethos is well illustrated in small but significant touches such as in assemblies, where pupils sit on mats owing to the cold floor. Pupils' progress is tracked carefully. Although this relatively new process is still being embedded across the school it has helped the school to identify the small group of pupils who are not on course to reach their targets. As a result appropriate action is now being taken to support them.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The very good leadership shown by the headteacher and her deputy is fundamental to the school's success. Everything they do is for the benefit of the pupils, striving to improve standards as well as their personal development. All staff have a good understanding of strengths and weaknesses in their subjects and the role of the subject leader is developing, with staff taking more responsibility for the standards attained in their subjects. Therefore, the school's evaluation of its own performance is accurate. The governors support the school well and are effectively involved in new initiatives. However, despite the school's best efforts, it is difficult to recruit and retain governors and there are several vacancies. Although this means that existing governors have to share more responsibilities between them, standards of governance are not adversely affected.

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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
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The behaviour of learners	2
The attendance of learners	2
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	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	3

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the 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

¹ Grade 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.

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 performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	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

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

14 November 2006

Dear Children

Roach Vale Primary School, Roach Vale, Parsons Heath, Colchester, Essex, CO4 3YN

Thank you for helping me when I visited your school. I enjoyed talking to you and watching you learn. I would like to tell you what I liked best.

You told me that the people in your school are kind and I agree with you. I thought that your behaviour was good and I was impressed by the way you held doors open for me. You have lots of exciting things to do in lessons and you go to interesting places. I wish I could have seen one of your 'Peer assemblies' as I think it is an excellent idea. You certainly know how to eat healthily and I am sure the grown ups enjoy being invited to the lunches that some of you cook! All the grown ups look after you well and help you to learn. If you find learning hard you get lots of help. Your families know that you go to a good school.

I have asked your teachers to give you even more help to reach your targets particularly in writing and mathematics. You can help them by continuing to try as hard as you can to do your best. I have also asked your teachers to help you to use interesting words when you are talking so you can use them in your writing and mathematics.

I hope you carry on enjoying your time at Roach Vale Primary School and do well in your next school.

Best wishes

Alison Pangbourne (Lead inspector)