

Rotherhithe Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	100810
Local Authority	Southwark
Inspection number	307492
Inspection dates	27–28 September 2007
Reporting inspector	Ian Wilson

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 on roll	
School	435
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Barry Maw
Headteacher	Ms Janet Anns
Date of previous school inspection	10 June 2002
School address	Rotherhithe New Road London SE16 2PL
Telephone number	020 7237 1586
Fax number	020 7237 3653

Age group	3–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Rotherhithe Primary School is a large school which serves an area of high social deprivation. The percentage of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds is well above average, with the largest group being pupils of Black African and Black British origin. A well above average percentage of pupils speak English as an additional language. The mobility of pupils and the proportions with learning difficulties are both high.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Rotherhithe is a satisfactory school with some good features. It has an inclusive ethos in which relationships are good and individuals are well looked after. Pupils are happy and enjoy school and parents are pleased with the school. 'Both my children enjoy and always look forward to attending school' was a typical comment.

Most children start school with levels of knowledge, skills and understanding that are well below those typical for their age. The standards that they attain when they leave school in Year 6 are rising but are still below average overall, particularly in mathematics. Pupils make satisfactory progress as they move through the school, but rates of progress vary significantly between classes and year groups because of inconsistencies in the quality of teaching. There is good teaching, but good practice is not being used sufficiently by leaders to help improve pockets of weakness. Overall, pupils' achievement is satisfactory. The mobility of pupils does affect their attainment, with pupils who have been in the school the longest generally attaining higher standards.

The school provides a high level of care and support for vulnerable pupils, pupils with learning difficulties and those speaking English as an additional language. As a result these pupils progress at least as well as others in the school. Higher attaining pupils, though making satisfactory progress, are not challenged sufficiently in lessons to do even better.

The school helps pupils to develop well personally, socially, emotionally and spiritually. Pupils know about the importance of staying safe and healthy. They behave well, are good at taking responsibility, and take action to make a difference to the lives of others. For example, they are involved in fundraising for charities such as 'Red Nose Day'.

The headteacher provides good leadership, and she is supported by an enthusiastic and capable senior team. The school evaluates its strengths and weaknesses well and uses this information to plan improvements. A sustained effort has led to improved standards in English. However, efforts to raise standards in other areas have been markedly less successful until very recently when standards in science in particular, have risen notably. The school's overall improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory and it has a satisfactory capacity for further improvement. The Governing Body does not have sufficient awareness of the strengths and weaknesses of the school in order to support the school effectively.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 3

Provision in the Foundation stage is satisfactory. Children settle well into school and make satisfactory progress in all the different areas of their learning, but they are still attaining standards that are considerably below those expected by the end of the Reception year. Teaching is satisfactory overall, and there is good teaching also. Routines are not always well established and some work and activities lack purpose as a result. There is good team work, between teachers and teaching assistants and good procedures in place to ensure children's care and welfare. Teachers' planning and assessment take account of children's individual needs and all the areas of learning are adequately covered. The very recently appointed leader of the Foundation Stage has good subject knowledge and a clear vision for what needs to be done to improve children's progress.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards, especially in mathematics.
- Improve the quality of teaching and the challenges provided for higher-attaining pupils, by ensuring that good practice is shared and acted on.
- Improve governance so that governors can challenge and support the school more effectively.

A small proportion of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Standards attained by pupils by the end of Year 6 are below average, but pupils' overall achievement is satisfactory because their attainment when they start school is very low. Indeed, their progress is good in some classes, reflecting the quality of the teaching provided. Standards attained by pupils at the end of the Reception Year and at the end of Year 2 are consistently well below average. Standards are rising at the upper end of the school and, in 2007, the school met its quite challenging targets.

The school has placed considerable emphasis on developing pupils' reading and writing skills, with good support being provided for pupils with learning difficulties and those speaking English as an additional language. As a result, progress, and consequently standards, in English have over time been better than in other areas, but standards are still below average. In mathematics, a declining trend has been reversed, but standards remain low. In science, a pattern of consistently low attainment has been overcome and good teaching in science in Year 6 enabled pupils in 2007 for the first time to achieve results that match those expected for pupils of their age. Relatively few pupils reach higher levels in English and mathematics.

Pupils with learning difficulties and those speaking English as an additional language make similar progress to other pupils.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' spiritual, moral social and cultural development is good. Relationships in the school are good and pupils behave well. There are few incidents of bullying and few exclusions. Pupils enjoy coming to school: 'It's never boring' and 'I learn a lot' were typical comments. The rates of attendance in the school are below average, but they are improving.

Pupils know a lot about the importance of healthy lifestyles, including eating well and taking exercise. They know about how to keep safe. For example, they understand about the importance of road safety and the problems associated with drugs. Pupils play a good part in contributing to the community, participating in fund raising events and local environmental developments. They have good opportunities to take on responsibilities and do this well, by acting as monitors, being members of the student council and helping younger children with their reading. Parents commented on how the school had helped their children gain confidence. These personal skills, coupled with sound skills in information and communication technology (ICT) ensure that they are satisfactorily prepared for their next stage in learning.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. All teachers have good relationships with their pupils and most manage their classes well. Teachers make good use of short-term learning targets for pupils. Pupils know their targets and find them helpful. ICT, such as electronic whiteboards, is used regularly by teachers and contributes to stimulating interest and helping pupils learn. Effective use of support staff enables vulnerable pupils, pupils with learning difficulties and those who are at the early stages of learning English to progress as well as other pupils in each class.

The quality of teaching is too variable, however, especially in the expectations by teachers of what pupils can achieve. The match of work to pupils' needs, particularly higher attaining pupils, is not always challenging enough. Inconsistencies in marking pupils' work mean that pupils are not always clear about what they have to do to improve. Consequently, pupils' progress lacks consistency. Where teaching is good, expectations are high and work is challenging and carefully planned. The outcome is a marked improvement in pupils' progress. Although there is quite a lot of good teaching, it is not widespread enough to ensure good progress in all years. There is also some unsatisfactory teaching, resulting primarily from inappropriate planning for pupils' learning needs and weak management of pupils' behaviour.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum is satisfactory. The school has prioritised the development of literacy skills and this strong emphasis on reading and writing in the curriculum has contributed to pupils' consistently better progress in English, compared with mathematics. The programme of additional support is well planned and helps develop the literacy skills of pupils who, for a range of reasons, lag behind their peers. However, planning for the needs of higher attaining pupils is inconsistent.

The curriculum, both through lessons and additional activities contributes well to pupils' personal development. For example, a Year 6 residential trip encourages team work, perseverance and group problem-solving. A well planned programme of personal and social education deals with issues such as sex and relationships education. The regular use of computers enables pupils to develop satisfactory ICT skills and also contributes to pupils' enjoyment of lessons.

The curriculum is enhanced by a variety of well attended clubs. These provide both fun and important extensions to the curriculum. The school links well with an extensive range of outside agencies and community groups for example the Youth Service provides play activities for large numbers of pupils every evening.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Care, guidance and support are good. Teachers and support staff know pupils and their needs well. The attention paid to individual needs results in good inclusion of pupils; for example, good use is made of learning mentors to support more vulnerable pupils, and outside agencies are used well to provide specialist help such as speech therapy and family support. Health and safety arrangements ensure a safe learning environment is maintained and there are good

arrangements for child protection. Many pupils commented about how they feel safe and well looked after in school.

The school has implemented good systems for tracking individual pupil's progress throughout the school. The information is used well by the school to plan support for vulnerable pupils and is being used with increasing effect to set challenging targets for all pupils, including the more able. The school's personal, social and health education programme helps pupils deal with the challenges they are likely to meet in their everyday lives, for example, raising awareness of racism and the dangers of drugs.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The headteacher provides good leadership and has developed an energetic and a committed senior team. All leaders share a sense of purpose and common values which include raising standards, supporting and meeting the learning needs of vulnerable pupils and helping pupils develop well personally and socially. The school evaluates its strengths and weaknesses thoroughly and accurately and uses the information to plan, set and then monitor targets. All the issues raised in the last inspection have been addressed, resulting in notable improvements in a number of areas such as provision for pupils with learning difficulties, and much improved use of ICT.

A particular focus has been raising standards in English and the school has met its quite challenging targets in this subject with some considerable success. There has been less attention paid to mathematics and science and standards in these areas have remained too low. However, the decline has been arrested and in 2007 the school met its targets. The school's efforts to raise standards have been hampered by quite a high turnover of staff and pupils. However, staffing in the school is now more stable and the appointment of some new, capable subject leaders is now having an impact, for example in science in Year 6. Governors are supportive of the school, but do not offer the level of challenge or have the depth of understanding about the weaknesses of the school, to help them provide truly effective support.

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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?	3
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?	2
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3

Achievement and standards

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

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 extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	3
The behaviour of learners	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2
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?	3
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3
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.

Annex A

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	3
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	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	3
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	4
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

9 October 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Rotherhithe Primary School, London, SE16 2PL

You may remember that three inspectors recently came to visit your school. We really enjoyed meeting you, your teachers and other people who work in the school. We are writing to let you know what we found out.

We think that you go to a satisfactory school. It is led well by your headteacher. She and your other teachers look after you well and we know that you enjoy school. You all make progress, but not all of you do as well as you are able, particularly in mathematics. Nearly all of you behave well, are polite and you look after one another. You develop good personal skills, such as self-confidence and being responsible and knowing how to stay safe and healthy.

We have made three suggestions as to what the school can do to improve further.

- Improve your learning, especially in mathematics.
- Improve the quality of teaching so that it is consistently good, and provide harder work for those of you that can do it.
- Help the governors to know more about the strengths and weaknesses of the school, so that they can support it more effectively.

Thank you again for being so friendly. We enjoyed meeting you. I send you my best wishes for the future.

Yours sincerely,

Ian Wilson

Lead Inspector