

# Rowlands Gill Primary School

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15<sup>th</sup> October 2019

Dear Parents / Carers

Please find attached our Ofsted report from our recent inspection, which was only ten days into the new school term. This inspection was carried out under the new framework, which only came into effect on the 2<sup>nd</sup> September.

You will notice that the report is written in a very different way to those you will have received previously. There is no section in this new style report to include information about progress which has been made since the last inspection. This is a real shame because the school has come such a long way in the last 27 months.

While we were really pleased that the inspectors understood and acknowledged the newness of the senior leadership team (Mr Boddy, Mr Bell and I) and all that we intend to do to improve the school further, the inspectors were not able to see the impact as yet for many of the areas. Therefore, the majority of the 'best fit' statements fell within the 'Requires Improvement' category. Every category inspected had elements of good and the inspectors constantly talked about green shoots appearing in the good criteria – we simply just didn't have long enough to prove that we were securely good.

The key areas which the inspectors identified were those which we had already identified ourselves and had already begun to work on. So, to that extent, it was good that our views on what needs to happen next in the school, were similar.

As you know, we have worked to establish a consistent approach to behaviour since arriving at the school and we implemented a new whole school behaviour policy within the first week, which was shared with parents during the 'Meet the Teacher' night. The children are all on-board with the system and the inspectors acknowledged that it was making a difference. However, the way they describe behaviour in their second paragraph paints a very negative picture of some children's behaviour, which is not reflective of typical behaviour in our school. The previous leadership team, local authority inspectors and governors agree that the behaviour described does not match with their experience of children's behaviour in school. To this extent, I have formally complained about, and challenged this judgement with Ofsted. The current version of the report has to be published, while the complaint is investigated.

Since the previous inspection, a great deal of the drive to improve has been with regard to English and Maths – the core subjects - and rightly so. It was always the plan that the focus this year, with new staff joining the team, would be on the wider curriculum. There is already a two-year cycle in place which is working well, but needs to be further developed to incorporate skills and ensure they progress appropriately across the school. With the appointment of new staff, we have been able to establish subject leadership teams, who will work together to further develop and refine all subjects this year, enabling more skilled leaders to develop those with less leadership experience. The importance of this area of the curriculum has been raised significantly under the new inspection framework.

Reading has improved across the school since the previous inspection and we already had plans in place for staff training and altering the methods of teaching reading - we simply hadn't had the time to make these changes within ten school days. Some children do find reading difficult and we have a team of dedicated volunteers who are coming into school every week and offering additional support to children with their reading on a 1:1 basis to help them to improve. The staff in Year 1 were just finishing their assessments of

the children's phonics knowledge and had only had the opportunity to read 1:1 with some children once or twice before the inspection; many of the children, having had 6 weeks off, were finding it difficult to get back up to speed. Consequently, there may have been some children who were reading books that seemed too challenging; this can happen so early in a new school year. However, we believe that the children are reading appropriately matched texts now.

The timing of this inspection was unfortunate, especially for Early Years, as the children had only been back into their full hours for 8 days. The focus of their first week in school is to establish rules and routines and to get to know one another and the adults. In the second week, baseline assessment was begun, whereby the staff observe the children working independently or carrying out teacher directed activity and use the information to capture what the children can do and their next steps. It is typical for this baseline assessment to last 3 to 4 weeks. As a result, decisions were just being made about which reading books to send home for children and the teaching of reading and writing, in the traditional sense, was not underway.

The governing body and local authority inspectors have been fully involved in the inspection process and in supporting the complaint about the judgement for behaviour but also my complaint about the conduct of the lead inspector. Unfortunately, her negativity, which was felt throughout the inspection process, is palpable in the report. The governors feel that the report has been poorly written, without any consideration of the audience, nor recognition for the progress made since the last inspection. Everyone involved feels that although the judgements are made on a 'best fit' basis, there is much more evidence of 'Good' than is referred to in the report. In order to share on views on some of the comments made in the report, we have attached an annex to the report. We hope this provides the insight which we feel is missing from the report in isolation.

Steve Horne, the Director of Education for Gateshead, has played a major part in supporting and driving improvement in our school since the last inspection. He too feels that the report doesn't capture the progress made and wanted to reassure parents that our school has made a significant turn-around and is providing a good education. The judgement of 'Requires Improvement' is simply about embedding the good work which has already begun and that now, under stable leadership and with the improved capacity of teaching along with the new appointments of permanent and excellent teachers, the school can embed and refine all of the good aspects which we know we now have.

Throughout the inspection, the children worked hard and made us extremely proud. The staff worked over and above what was expected of them; they attended very early morning meetings and stayed very late at night to show the inspectors how good our school is. Lunchtime staff volunteered to support in class and we received lots of support from the local authority, governors and Mr Jones and Mrs Hocking, who have only just left. We also appreciated the kind words of support we received from parents and carers on the yard and through the parental survey.

What is clear is that everyone has the same goal – to make our school the best it can be for our children and our community: this continues regardless of the latest report. Most importantly of all, we mustn't lose sight of the fact that wonderful things happen in this school all day, every day for our children.

If you have any concerns about the report, please don't hesitate to contact me. I will also be available throughout Parent's Evening tomorrow night, which is another opportunity to discuss the report. Even if you don't have a Parent's Evening appointment but would like to talk about the inspection report, please just call in and I will be happy to meet with you.

Once again, I would like to thank you for the support you have already shown to the staff, children and I since September. We really do appreciate it.

Yours sincerely,



Mrs L Clarke  
Headteacher



Mr G Archer  
Chair of Governors



Mr S Horne  
Director of Education

# Inspection of Rowlands Gill Community Primary School

Dominines Close, Rowlands Gill, Tyne and Wear NE39 2PP

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Inspection dates:

17–18 September 2019

## **Overall effectiveness**

## **Requires improvement**

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The quality of education

**Requires improvement**

Behaviour and attitudes

**Requires improvement**

Personal development

**Requires improvement**

Leadership and management

**Requires improvement**

Early years provision

**Requires improvement**

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection

Requires improvement

## **What is it like to attend this school?**

Pupils enjoy coming to school each day and feel safe. Attendance is good and improving. Pupils told us that teachers know them well and are kind and supportive. Pupils are not worried about bullying. They are sure that adults will listen to them if they have any concerns. Pupils feel confident that adults will look after them if they feel ill or get hurt. Leaders and staff make sure that the school is a happy, calm and safe place to learn.

Leaders' new approach to managing pupils' behaviour is starting to make a difference. Pupils like earning rewards for good behaviour. Everyone is clearer about what is expected of them. However, not all behaviour is good. At times pupils ignore adults' requests or become distracted from their work. They do not always listen carefully to adults or each other. Some pupils avoid completing their work by swinging back on their chairs or chatting to friends. This sometimes happens when pupils' work is too easy or too hard.

Pupils take part in range of additional activities, including the breakfast club and after-school clubs. They like going on out-of-school visits and having visitors into school. The recent 'Rowlands Gill: The Great War and the Great Peace' project undertaken by Year 5 and Year 6 was especially memorable. Pupils reflected on moral issues presented by the project. They developed their knowledge and respect for different people's feelings and views about the war.

## **What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?**

The new headteacher and senior leadership team know that the education provided by the school needs to improve. They are committed to doing so and are wasting no time in getting started. They have provided good-quality training for staff. Teachers' improved subject knowledge supports them to plan the small steps in learning that pupils need to take next. For example, in mathematics, pupils can remember and recall number facts more rapidly. This is helping them to calculate quickly and accurately.

There is still lots to do. While some subjects are now better planned and taught, too many are not. New leaders have not thought about most subjects in enough detail. They know what they want pupils to learn overall but have not broken this down into the smaller steps that pupils will need to secure to reach these goals. Leaders' plans do not show how pupils will build on what they already know as they move through the school.

Pupils' reading is beginning to improve. Training has improved the confidence of some staff. The library has been revamped. A range of carefully selected books are shared with pupils in each year group. Pupils are developing a greater love of reading. They are building a bank of stories and poems that they can use in their own story-telling and writing. But it is early days. Poor teaching in the past is stopping some pupils from learning to read confidently and accurately. Not all pupils

in the early years or Year 1 and Year 2 read books that are well matched to the sounds and letters they know. This means too many struggle to read fluently and with understanding.

Children in the early years are well looked after by warm, caring adults. They have lots of opportunities to develop their physical skills. Most children can climb the steep, grassy hill outside, balancing and climbing with skill. Children are outgoing and confident. Children's reading and writing do not get off to the same, prompt start reliably well.

Leaders are sensitive to the views of parents and the community. They have developed better methods of communication. Parents told us that they are relieved to have permanent leaders in place. They find the headteacher and her new deputy headteacher approachable and willing to listen. Staff told us that the headteacher listens carefully to them too. They feel valued. Governors and senior leaders are mindful of staff workload.

The headteacher expects the best for all pupils. She is already making a difference. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) who attend the additionally resourced mainstream school provision (ARMS) are learning alongside their friends in the main school more often. They feel more included. Leaders understand that more needs to be done. Currently, not all pupils with SEND achieve as well as they should.

Most curriculum leaders are new to post. The quality of their work varies. This means that in some subjects, such as science, modern foreign languages and history, pupils do not learn as well they should. Appropriate training is beginning to help some leaders to make improvements in their areas of the curriculum.

Governors have worked well with the local authority during this period of significant turbulence. They have an accurate view of the school's performance and know that further work is needed.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

All staff understand their duties of care and protection. Their knowledge of risks and dangers to pupils, such as social media, are secure. Leaders ensure that staff have regular child protection updates. Leaders check safeguarding information and take prompt action when necessary. Important information is shared in a timely manner with other agencies where appropriate.

## **What does the school need to do to improve?**

### **(Information for the school and appropriate authority)**

- The curriculum is broad and balanced. Pupils have access to all of the subjects of the national curriculum. However, the quality of what pupils receive, in too many

subjects, does not match the ambition or rigour of the national curriculum. Leaders need to make sure that the curriculum in all subjects, including reading, history, science and modern languages, is well structured and coherently planned so that pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education.

- The approach to reading is not consistently effective, particularly in the early years and in key stage 1. Pupils' reading books are not sufficiently well matched to their phonic knowledge. Children in Reception do not get off to a prompt start in their reading. Those pupils working below age-related expectations do not have enough opportunities to practise their reading with adults. Pupils need to learn to read with better fluency, accuracy and confidence.
- Pupils with SEND in the ARMS unit are starting to experience greater inclusivity and access wider school activities. Nevertheless, not all pupils with SEND acquire knowledge according to their ability. Leaders need to make sure that the curriculum is better adapted by teachers to meet the needs of all pupils.
- The behaviour of pupils in lessons requires close attention. Low-level disruption needs to be eliminated as it gets in the way of pupils' learning. Some pupils' behaviour deteriorates when they do not have work that matches their needs. Teachers need to ensure that sequences of lessons build upon pupils' existing knowledge securely.
- The curriculum in mathematics is supporting pupils to gain automatic recall of basic mathematical concepts. This positive picture is not consistent across all subjects. Leaders should make sure that curriculum plans show precisely what pupils should know and when they should know it. In this way, leaders need to assure themselves that pupils are acquiring the agreed knowledge and making strong gains in their learning across all subjects.
- Most children in the early years bring confidence and a broad range of vocabulary to school. Leaders should ensure that all children build promptly on their existing knowledge and skills, getting off to a prompt start in their reading and writing.

## How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use Ofsted Parent View information when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

If you're not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

## Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

In the report, '[disadvantaged pupils](#)' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route.

## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	131081
<b>Local authority</b>	Gateshead
<b>Inspection number</b>	10110581
<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Maintained
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3 to 11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	239
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair of governing body</b>	Graham Archer
<b>Headteacher</b>	Lindsey Clarke
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.rowlandsgillprimary.org">www.rowlandsgillprimary.org</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	16–17 May 2017

## Information about this school

- There has been significant staff turbulence since the previous inspection. Three senior leaders, including the headteacher, deputy headteacher and key stage 2 leader are new to the school from September 2019. The special educational needs coordinator is new to post from September 2019 and most curriculum leaders, including those for English, music, science, modern languages, computing and religious education, are also new to post. There have been several changes in teaching staff and teaching support staff across key stages.

## Information about this inspection

We carried out this inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- Inspectors examined the quality of education by visiting lessons, meeting with a range of pupils and staff, including leaders, looking at pupils' work and examining curriculum documentation.
- Inspectors looked closely at reading, history, science, modern foreign languages, physical education and mathematics.



- Inspectors considered the views of parents through face-to-face discussions and via the 72 free-text messages and 74 responses to Ofsted's Parent View survey, which were received.
- Inspectors listened to pupils' reading, observed their breaktimes, met with pupils formally to gather their opinions and held informal discussions across both days of the inspection. No pupils responded to Ofsted's pupil survey.
- A wide range of safeguarding information and documentation was scrutinised, including behaviour logs and attendance records.

### **Inspection team**

Fiona Manuel, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Kate Byrne

Ofsted Inspector

Stephen Fallon

Ofsted Inspector

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## **Annex to the Report - Response to Certain Points Made by the Inspector**

In our view, some sections of the report do not reflect the true picture of the school, therefore we have extracted them from the report here to provide some accompanying notes for you to read and understand more clearly the school's position.

### **Comments Regarding Behaviour**

At the top of page 2 in the section "What is it like to attend this school?"

Leaders' new approach to managing pupils' behaviour is starting to make a difference. Pupils like earning rewards for good behaviour. Everyone is clearer about what is expected of them. However, not all behaviour is good. At times pupils ignore adults' requests or become distracted from their work. They do not always listen carefully to adults or each other. Some pupils avoid completing their work by swinging back on their chairs or chatting to friends. This sometimes happens when pupils' work is too easy or too hard.

And on page 4 in the section "What does the school need to do to improve"

The behaviour of pupils in lessons requires close attention. Low-level disruption needs to be eliminated as it gets in the way of pupils' learning. Some pupils' behaviour deteriorates when they do not have work that matches their needs. Teachers need to ensure that sequences of lessons build upon pupils' existing knowledge securely.

These paragraphs are particularly disappointing as they appear to be the sole basis for not giving a judgement of good for behaviour in the school. Although we acknowledge that pupils might occasionally be chatting with friends and not focusing on their work, it is to an extent which is not unusual in many schools. The use of the words 'some', 'at times' shows that these behaviours are not common but because this section sits so early in the report we feel that it paints a picture of chaotic classrooms which we absolutely do not have. We have already improved low level behaviour through our new policy but we believe that this statement in itself should not be used to suggest that, in a school where pupils are very polite, well behaved and focused on their work, behaviour is not good enough. We also believe that the final comments about pupils' work being "too easy or too hard" is purely speculation and could not be evidenced in the time available to the inspectors.

### **Comments Regarding the New Leadership Team**

Towards the bottom of page 2 in the section “What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?”

There is still lots to do. While some subjects are now better planned and taught, too many are not. New leaders have not thought about most subjects in enough detail. They know what they want pupils to learn overall but have not broken this down into the smaller steps that pupils will need to secure to reach these goals. Leaders’ plans do not show how pupils will build on what they already know as they move through the school.

Towards the bottom of page 3 also in the section “What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?”

Most curriculum leaders are new to post. The quality of their work varies. This means that in some subjects, such as science, modern foreign languages and history, pupils do not learn as well they should. Appropriate training is beginning to help some leaders to make improvements in their areas of the curriculum.

While we acknowledge that there is still work to be done in improving the school there have been huge changes within the school but you cannot and should not change everything at once. We are not surprised that, “New leaders have not thought about most subjects in enough detail...” as at the time of the inspection they had only been in post for 2 weeks. Although the new leaders had put in lots of work over the summer, they could not do detailed work until they saw the subject being taught. The inspectors were impressed with some Leaders and acknowledged that they have the skills and ability to support colleagues to ensure we have a coherent and well planned curriculum. This is not something which can be done overnight and will be worked on across the year, with constant review and refinement which is the only way to ensure we get it right.

### **Comments on Reading**

In the paragraph that straddles pages 2 and 3 in the section “What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?”

But it is early days. Poor teaching in the past is stopping some pupils from learning to read confidently and accurately. Not all pupils in the early years or Year 1 and Year 2 read books that are well matched to the sounds and letters they know. This means too many struggle to read fluently and with understanding.

It is common knowledge that the school has been through a turbulent few years, teaching issues have been addressed through support and training and several staff have moved on. There is no denying that poor teaching had impacted in the past but this has been addressed and we now have a strong team of teachers doing everything they can to support the children who continue to find reading difficult.

This paragraph seems to suggest that the teaching of reading to pupils in Year 1 and Year 2 has been poor. This is not the case and results for KS1 reading tests (taken at the end of Year 2) have been good in recent years. When an inspection takes place so early in the year it is difficult for teachers to have assessed the pupils' reading in detail. Typically, a teacher will hear a pupil read once a week and changes over the summer mean that pupils may not immediately be matched with the most suitable books. There was no regard given to this fact.

In the first full paragraph on page 3 in the section "What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?"

The approach to reading is not consistently effective, particularly in the early years and in key stage 1. Pupils' reading books are not sufficiently well matched to their phonic knowledge. Children in Reception do not get off to a prompt start in their reading. Those pupils working below age-related expectations do not have enough opportunities to practise their reading with adults. Pupils need to learn to read with better fluency, accuracy and confidence.

Last year the emphasis on improvement was on Maths and English as the need in these subjects was greatest. At the same time, reading has improved since the last inspection and prior to the inspection we already had a clear picture of how to further improve reading and planned actions with timescales, although there is no acknowledgement of this. In fact, there was training with the Local Authority consultant planned for the days of the inspection and the Senior Leaders were due to develop the Reading action plan on the day the inspection phone call was received, both of which had to be cancelled.

### **Comments on the Curriculum**

In the paragraph that spans pages 3 and 4 in the section "What does the school need to do to improve?"

The curriculum is broad and balanced. Pupils have access to all of the subjects of the national curriculum. However, the quality of what pupils receive, in too many subjects, does not match the ambition or rigour of the national curriculum. Leaders need to make sure that the curriculum in all subjects, including reading, history, science and modern languages, is well structured and coherently planned so that pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education.

As mentioned in connection with the last section, it is impossible to focus on all areas of the curriculum at once and we are aware that some areas outside the core subjects of Maths and English need additional work. This has long been the plan for this academic year and this work has begun. This is not to say that our curriculum isn't fit for purpose - it is! However, it needs further refinement to ensure small steps for progression are clear, towards the already established end points, and that all subject leaders can verbalise what these steps are for their subject area. With a new subject leadership team in place, this was always going to be a difficult task, two weeks into term.

### Comments on Early Years

In the second paragraph on page 3 in the section “What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?”

Children’s reading and writing do not get off to the same, prompt start reliably well.

Early Years is Nursery and Reception. Some of the pupils in Nursery had only been at school for 7 days and so the emphasis at this early stage of their time in school is ensuring they are settled and happy in the new routines whilst at the same time baseline assessments of their abilities were still being undertaken. During this baseline assessment period of roughly 3 weeks, the teachers are making judgements about what the children can do, in order to identify their next steps in learning. A prompt start is of course important, but must be pitched suitably to provide the children with the appropriate next steps in their learning journey, hence the need for a baseline period. All areas of the classroom provide children with opportunities for early writing and reading, story time is a key part of the day and phonics sessions are taught every day. This is all appropriate for the first few weeks of the school year in Early Years. There was no regard for the baseline assessment period in the report even though it is a feature of every Early Years classroom across England, for the first few weeks of the school year.

We hope these comments help you to contextual some of the comments which we feel were unfair within the report.



Mrs L Clarke  
Headteacher



Mr G Archer  
Chair of Governors