

# Ropery Walk Primary School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	113993
<b>Local authority</b>	Durham
<b>Inspection number</b>	378781
<b>Inspection dates</b>	27–28 February 2012
<b>Lead inspector</b>	John Paddick

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	207
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Geraldine Bleasdale
<b>Headteacher</b>	Angela Bell
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	25 November 2008
<b>School address</b>	Ropery Walk Seaham SR7 7JZ
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## Introduction

Inspection team

John Paddick  
Clare Coburn

Additional inspector  
Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. The inspectors observed 18 parts of lessons taught by nine teachers and three trained assistants. Two of these were joint observations with the headteacher. Inspectors held meetings with members of the governing body, the headteacher, senior staff, and groups of pupils in Years 4 and 6. They observed the school's work and looked at a number of documents, including the school development plan, safeguarding policies, and the school's analysis of pupils' progress. They analysed 60 questionnaires from parents and carers, and others completed by staff and pupils. Inspectors took account of the responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) in planning the inspection.

## Information about the school

Ropery Walk is an average-sized primary school. Pupils are predominately of White British heritage. Few pupils are from minority ethnic groups or speak English as an additional language. The proportion of disabled pupils or those with special educational needs is above average. Similarly, the proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is also above average. The school meets the current floor standards. There is a breakfast club which is managed by the governing body.

**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

<b>Overall Effectiveness</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Achievement of pupils</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Quality of teaching</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Behaviour and safety of pupils</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Leadership and management</b>	<b>2</b>

## Key Findings

- Ropery Walk Primary is a good school where pupils' attainment is rising rapidly in response to the vision and drive of a highly-committed, skilful and outstanding headteacher. It is not outstanding because most teaching is good, rather than outstanding.
- Achievement is good because children typically join the school in Reception with skills that are well below those expected for their ages, particularly in communication, language and literacy. They make good progress to reach broadly average attainment by Year 6. Currently, pupils' attainment in Year 6 is above average in reading and mathematics and broadly average in writing.
- Good and sometimes exceptional teaching enables most pupils in all year groups to make good progress. The sophisticated tracking system soon picks up any pupils who are not reaching their potential and triggers extra help to get them on track again. Teachers plan lessons well and use a wide variety of approaches and an excellent range of resources to maintain pupils' full engagement. Occasionally, teaching dips to satisfactory when the pace of learning slows compared to that in the good lessons.
- Pupils behave well and they say that they enjoy school. Excellent care, guidance and support enable them to thrive and increase in confidence. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is exceptional. Pupils co-operate extremely well with teachers and their assistants both in class and when moving around school. They have very positive attitudes to learning and work hard.
- The headteacher provides a very clear and extremely effective educational direction. She has a relentless focus on the quality of education and the progress that pupils are making. Leadership of teaching and arrangements for performance management of staff are both good. The large majority of

members of staff fully support the headteacher and say that they are proud to belong to the school. However, a very small minority of staff does not share fully the leadership's vision for the future direction of the school.

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

- Improve teaching so that it is at least good and a greater proportion is outstanding by:
  - increasing the sense of urgency in class through setting pupils challenging time targets for the completion of activities and by taking less time to move from one activity to another
  - improving lesson-planning so that maximum use is made of the time available and it is clear how all groups of pupils can make good progress
  - increase the use of visual material so pupils can quickly understand what the teacher is attempting to explain.
  
- Continue to work with staff, the governing body and the local authority to enable all staff to share fully the leadership's vision for the school's future direction.

## Main Report

### Achievement of pupils

Most parents and carers are pleased with the amount of progress their children are making. Inspection evidence supports this positive view. In Reception, children make good progress often from very low starting points. Although they are still behind expected levels of development when they transfer to Year 1, the gap narrows substantially as a result of good teaching. Children currently in Reception were observed several times during the inspection and on each occasion they were making good progress across many areas of learning both on adult-led activities and those chosen by the children themselves.

Inspectors observed accelerating rates of progress in most classes from Reception through to Year 6 and particularly in reading where pupils were receiving small group and individual lessons with teachers or assistants. Reading in Year 2 is now average and better than it was in 2011. In Year 6, reading is above average as it was in 2011. A real strength of the school is the way that pupils present their written work in mathematics, literacy, science and a wide range of topics. Inspectors observed pupils of all ages making good progress with their writing and mathematics. More-able pupils were found to be reaching high standards, particularly in mathematics in Year 6.

By the time pupils leave Year 6 they reach broadly average attainment. National test results in Year 6 rose sharply in 2011. They were average in English and above average in mathematics. These results reflected better than average progress between Years 3 and 6 compared to national figures for all groups of pupils. Pupils in the current Year 6 are half a year ahead of national average expectations. They have made good progress since their substantially below average assessments at the end of Year 2 in 2008. Most pupils read a wide variety of texts fluently with expression

and good comprehension. Most of the weaker readers are close to average standards. In mathematics, more pupils than normal for this age are fully confident in using fractions, decimals and percentages during problem-solving activities.

As a result of well-planned intervention programmes and individual support, disabled pupils and those with special educational needs make good progress. The same applies to all other major groups in the school such as girls and boys and pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals. The school provides effective packages of extra help to any pupils who are found to be falling short of the challenging targets that the school sets for them.

### **Quality of teaching**

Parents and carers believe that teaching is good and inspection evidence supports this view. The good curriculum provides pupils of all abilities with secure pathways to improve their basic skills well. It also underpins pupils' exceptional spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Teachers have high expectations of pupils and manage their classes exceptionally well. They usually plan their lessons well and match work effectively to the needs of all of their pupils. Often this means that a teacher or assistant works with a smaller group of slower- or faster-moving pupils to provide effective extra support or individual help. For example, in an outstanding lesson for a small group of higher-attaining pupils in mathematics the teacher enabled the pupils to cover a huge amount of work in the time available. The older pupils in the school say that lessons have improved over the last two years because they get much more done and feel that they are making much better progress than previously.

Teachers use a wide variety of approaches and resources which fully engage pupils' interest and move their learning on quickly. Usually, lessons proceed at a good pace with teachers skilfully questioning pupils to ensure that they understand new concepts before they move on. For example, during an excellent numeracy session in Reception children were learning to count to 20. Occasionally, the pace of learning declines to satisfactory. This is because the teacher has planned for satisfactory rather than good progress to be made. Pace and urgency can be lost because pupils do not always have challenging time targets for the completion of activities and sometimes they take too long to move from one activity to another. Sometimes, teachers' explanations are not understood quickly by pupils because opportunities to present visual material are missed. Very thorough marking of pupils' work identifies key errors well and clearly indicates how improvements can be made. Teachers mark pupils' written work in a way that shows them how they are progressing through the levels of the National Curriculum and how their results relate to their targets.

### **Behaviour and safety of pupils**

Pupils conduct themselves well in lessons and around the school. They are polite and courteous and have good relationships with the adults who work with them. Bullying or unacceptable behaviour are relatively rare and are dealt with swiftly if they occur. Most parents and carers express confidence in the school's systems for dealing with such occurrences but a few do express concerns about them. In the two days that they were in school, inspectors observed pupils carefully in class, having lunch, and

at playtime outside. They found that behaviour was consistently good and that pupils responded promptly to instructions from adults. In some lessons pupils' behaviour was impeccable. Pupils display good levels of concentration in class and consistently do their best to produce good quality work. They take responsibilities seriously and are proud of their roles as prefects and members of the school council.

The school provides pupils with a very supportive and safe environment for their education. Pupils say they enjoy their time in school and recognise they are making good progress. They display a strong commitment to hard work and enjoy very positive relationships with the adults who work with them. They say they feel safe in school and have a good understanding of the risks to which they might be exposed, for example in Internet use and on roads and railways. Considerable efforts are made to ensure that pupils attend school regularly. The effectiveness of these measures is reflected in the overall attendance figures which have risen from average last year to above average so far this year. The school uses the expertise of a range of agencies to provide effective support for pupils experiencing difficulties that affect their behaviour or attendance.

### **Leadership and management**

The headteacher provides the school with exceptionally strong and effective leadership. Her drive ensures that the school continues to improve. The school's self-evaluation is accurate and informs excellent development-planning that is clear about how improvements are to be made. A strong feature is the effective programme for the professional development of staff which involves sharing good practice within school and draws on expert help from outside. The impact of this is particularly evident in the quality of teaching and in the consistently good quality and presentation of pupils' work. Monitoring of the development plans is rigorous and leads directly to the sharply rising standards for pupils of all ages from Reception to Year 6. Strategies to improve teaching, such as lesson observation and scrutiny of pupils' work have proved to be very successful. Governance has improved since the previous inspection and is now good. Members of the governing body monitor the school's work effectively and probe and challenge when they think that more can be done. As a result of all of these efforts, the pupils' experience a good and varied curriculum which is designed to lift attainment in basic skills, promote good progress and underpin excellent spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The very large majority of staff fully support the headteacher in the realisation of her vision for top quality education. A very small minority of staff does not share this vision fully. Previous attempts to resolve the issue, involving the governing body and local authority, have not so far been successful. Whilst it is not affecting pupils' progress, it is unsettling for some parents and carers who have become aware of the issue.

Safeguarding procedures meet all requirements. Adults who have access to pupils are checked rigorously before they enter the buildings. A very well-organised breakfast club provides pupils with a very pleasant start to the school day where pupils of all ages make friends and the older ones help the youngest. A strong commitment to equality of opportunity is reflected in the success the school is having in closing gaps in attainment between different groups of pupils. Issues from the previous inspection have been tackled extremely successfully. For example, attainment in mathematics has risen from below average to above average and the

leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage has improved from satisfactory to good. These successes and the substantially rising attainment clearly indicate that the school has good capacity to improve further.



## 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

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	46	46	8	0
Primary schools	8	47	40	5
Secondary schools	14	38	40	8
Special schools	28	48	20	4
Pupil referral units	15	50	29	5
All schools	11	46	38	6

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2010 to 31 August 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://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.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add up exactly to 100.

## Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Behaviour	how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and 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 governors and 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.
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.
Safety	how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.

**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.**



29 February 2012

Dear Pupils

### **Inspection of Ropery Walk Primary School, Seaham SR7 7JZ**

Thank you for making the team so welcome when we came to inspect your school recently. A particular 'thank you' goes to those of you who filled in the questionnaires or met with us to read aloud or talk about your school and the progress you are making. We were really impressed by your good behaviour and your good attitudes to work.

We found that your school is providing you with a good quality of education. It is a quickly-improving school where all groups of pupils are making good progress. Teachers and their assistants know exactly how much progress you are making and organise extra help if you start to fall behind. We found that your school provides you all with an excellent atmosphere for learning, and teaching which is very often good. We were pleased to hear that you enjoy coming to school and that the older pupils say that lessons have improved compared to when they were younger. We really were impressed by the way that prefects take their responsibilities seriously and really do a good job in helping to look after the younger pupils.

Your school can still improve further and we have asked the governing body, headteacher and staff to make an improvement to enable you to learn even more quickly. This is to:

- improve a few lessons so that all of you are taught well all of the time.

You can help by continuing to behave well and work hard.

With every best wish for the future,

Yours sincerely,

John Paddick  
Lead Inspector

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