



Robert Ferguson Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 112242
LEA Cumbria
Inspection number 278884
Inspection dates 7 March 2006 to 8 March 2006
Reporting inspector Mr Martin Bradley HMI

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	East Dale Street
School category	Community		Carlisle
Age range of pupils	3 to 11		Cumbria, CA2 5LA
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01228 607528
Number on roll	311	Fax number	01228 607529
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mr Chris Southward
Date of previous inspection	1 November 2000	Headteacher	Mr Alan Rutter

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Robert Ferguson Primary School takes most of its pupils from an area of mixed private and local authority housing south west of the centre of Carlisle. The number of pupils has fallen significantly in the last three years due to changes in housing, and there are now 311 pupils attending full time and 26 attending the Nursery part time. From September 2005, this has led to some classes having mixed age groups. Attainment on entry is generally below national expectations. The number of pupils taking up free school meals is slightly above average, while there are few pupils with a minority ethnic background. The proportion of pupils on the register of those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is lower than the national average. For over 10 years, the headteacher has held responsibilities outside the school, and this has led to additional funding being provided to cover for his absence.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 4

In accordance with section 13 (3) of the Education Act 2005, HMCI is of the opinion that this school requires significant improvement, because it is performing significantly less well than in all the circumstances it could reasonably be expected to perform. The school is therefore given a Notice to Improve. Significant improvement is required in relation to the evaluation of assessment and target setting, monitoring the use of these, enabling the pupils to meet challenging targets, and to raise standards.

Standards achieved by the end of the Foundation Stage are in line with national expectation, and those at the end of Key Stage 1 are satisfactory overall, but with elements which are below national averages. The standards achieved by the end of Key Stage 2 are inadequate. They have declined significantly in recent years and are currently very low. The progress made by pupils is uneven across the school, although pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make at least satisfactory progress, as do those in the Foundation Stage and many in Key Stage 1. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory; however, there is insufficient use made of targets identified for individual pupils in order to raise standards. The present assessment practices provide group targets, but too often these do not present sufficient challenge to raise individual pupils' attainment. This work is not monitored and evaluated effectively, and the staff team responsible for assessment and target setting do not have opportunities to maintain adequate oversight of the use of targets in classes. The absence of clear leadership for assessment and target setting is a significant weakness. Elsewhere leadership and management are satisfactory: where staff have been given specific roles, these are carried out effectively. The school has the capacity to improve.

Personal, social and emotional development is good and is well supported by carefully planned and monitored programmes. A number of initiatives effectively promote positive behaviour and classroom discipline, both of which are good. Provision for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is good and it is well managed.

What the school should do to improve further

In order to improve the school should:

- raise standards in English, mathematics and science by the end of Key Stage 2;
- develop the management of monitoring, evaluating and tracking pupil progress and achievement, especially in Key Stage 2, and promote the current best practices in all classes;
- ensure that assessment is more closely linked to targets set for pupils, so that they all know their targets and the ways they can raise their standards of achievement.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 4

The school graded achievement and standards as satisfactory; however, in the inspectors' judgement they are inadequate. In the Foundation Stage, pupils enter

school with achievement below the national expectations. By the end of the Reception Year, achievement is in line with national expectations. At Key Stage 1 in 2005, achievement in reading and mathematics rose significantly from 2004 levels, and were in line with national average levels. Achievement in writing was below that average, especially for the more able pupils. However, the levels of pupil attainment by the end of Key Stage 2 have fallen significantly each year since 2003 so that in 2005 pupils' progress was in the bottom 6% nationally in English, mathematics and science. The standards achieved by the end of Key Stage 2 are inadequate. Pupils' progress reflects these uneven standards of achievement at Key Stages 1 and 2.

In the lessons seen, achievement was satisfactory. In no lessons was it inadequate, although few were good. This indicates that the organisation of class ability groups in Years 5 and 6 and other changes, including the introduction of targets, is beginning to have an impact on pupils' progress. Evidence from the lessons observed and from other data indicates that the school does not provide sufficiently consistently for the more able pupils, extending their knowledge and understanding. For these pupils, the pace of work is too slow. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are well supported and make good progress.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

The school considers this to be good, and the inspectors agree. It has been a major focus of the school's work in recent years with the objective of creating a positive learning environment. Learners' spiritual and cultural development is satisfactory. Personal, moral, social and emotional development is good. This has been successfully supported by the Jigsaw project, a withdrawal programme linked to class discussions about issues of concern to the children, including ways of dealing with difficult behaviour. These experiences have been effectively and consistently applied by teachers in classroom situations, so that pupils behave well. This supports positive attitudes towards their learning. The number of exclusions has also fallen significantly. Children enjoy school and staff deal effectively with any incidents of bullying. Attendance is satisfactory and punctuality is good. Pupils are encouraged to adopt safe practices. Healthy lifestyles are promoted well through the good quality school meals, the promotion of sports activities and the curriculum. The pupils' contribution to the school community is satisfactory and they are beginning to develop the skills necessary for their future economic well-being.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

The school considered that the quality of teaching and learning is good; however, the inspectors' view is that this is satisfactory as too few learners make good progress. The great majority of lessons seen had satisfactory teaching. In a minority it was good;

in none was it inadequate. Teachers showed satisfactory subject knowledge, but in most lessons the work did not address the full range of pupils' abilities. In the best lessons, work was well organised to meet the needs of the higher and lower attaining pupils. The school has introduced the use of sets for English and mathematics in Years 5 and 6 with a view to raising attainment. There are some early indications that the teaching of these year groups is more clearly focused upon pupils' identified learning needs so that they are making satisfactory progress.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The school considers the quality of the curriculum to be good. In the inspectors' view it is satisfactory. The needs of most pupils are well met; however, too often the more able are insufficiently challenged by work which does not match their learning targets in literacy and numeracy. Statutory requirements are met and the school's emphasis on personal, social and emotional education is a strength of the school. There is good provision for ICT. Time allocated for literacy and numeracy is satisfactory; however, in different classes containing the same age groups, different amounts of time are allocated to these subjects. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities have well organised curriculum opportunities. Learners are satisfactorily prepared for their future economic well-being. Education for safety and health is at least satisfactory and often good. Clubs and activities are provided mainly for Key Stage 2 pupils and are mainly sports related: many pupils make satisfactory use of these.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

The school considers that care, guidance and support are good. The inspectors' judgement is that this is satisfactory. Risk assessment policies and procedures are in place but no one has overall responsibility for the oversight of health and safety. Child protection procedures are good. The personal support given to pupils is good but it is not consistently linked to setting them challenging academic targets in order to raise standards of achievement.

Leadership and management

Grade: 4

The school judged leadership and management to be good; however, in the inspectors' view it is inadequate. The school's self evaluation is currently too descriptive and does not evaluate its position. However, there are members of the senior management team who have a clearer view of the issues and who have been able to put in place some useful strategies to raise attainment, including the development of target setting and the use of ability grouping in Years 5 and 6.

The leadership and management have made significant efforts to raise standards over the last two years, with the support of the local authority. However, standards have fallen during that time. Target setting is not identified as an issue in the school

improvement plan. The separately coordinated work with pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is based on individuals' identified needs. The work with these pupils is good, well managed and effective in providing clear targets based upon pupils' individual education plans and detailed up to date assessments. Similarly the leadership of pastoral work and of the Jigsaw project is good.

The school runs smoothly on a day to day basis. It is an orderly and safe environment in which the staff work hard, as do most of the pupils. This aspect of leadership and management is satisfactory.

Overall self-evaluation is satisfactory and the day to day managers have a clear view of weaknesses; however, strategies to raise the present levels of attainment lack clear direction. There is no overall coordinator for assessment and the tracking of pupil progress. This work is shared between several members of staff. Where staff have been given specific roles, these are well managed but staff job descriptions are not fully up to date and have not been drafted for all senior staff. This process does not have a clear timescale. Significant improvement is required in relation to the evaluation of assessment and target setting, monitoring the use of these, enabling the pupils to meet challenging targets, and to raise standards.

The school regularly seeks the views of parents and governors and to address their concerns, such as through the healthy eating initiative. There are satisfactory links with other providers. The governing body has recently developed its work, and provides satisfactory support. Due to falling rolls, the school has run a deficit budget in recent years. With the support of the local authority, this is being effectively managed, and a planned programme to move into surplus in the foreseeable future is broadly on track. However the school does not provide satisfactory value for money. The school has a capacity to improve, but makes insufficient use of the information which it holds to raise individual pupils' standards of attainment.

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Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	School Overall	16-19
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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?	4	NA
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	3	NA
The quality and standards in foundation stage	3	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3	NA
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	Yes	NA
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	No	NA

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	4	NA
The standards ¹ reached by learners	4	NA
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	4	NA
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2	NA

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2	NA
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3	NA
The behaviour of learners	2	NA
The attendance of learners	3	NA
How well learners enjoy their education	3	NA
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	NA
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2	NA
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	3	NA
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3	NA

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	3	NA
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3	NA
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	3	NA

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	4	NA
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	4	NA
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	4	NA
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3	NA
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	4	NA
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3	NA
The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected	Yes	NA

The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy	
Learners are encouraged and enabled to eat and drink healthily	Yes
Learners are encouraged and enabled to take regular exercise	Yes
Learners are discouraged from smoking and substance abuse	Yes
Learners are educated about sexual health	Yes
The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe	
Procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements	Yes
Risk assessment procedures and related staff training are in place	Yes
Action is taken to reduce anti-social behaviour, such as bullying and racism	Yes
Learners are taught about key risks and how to deal with them	Yes
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution	
Learners are helped to develop stable, positive relationships	Yes
Learners, individually and collectively, participate in making decisions that affect them	Yes
Learners are encouraged to initiate, participate in and manage activities in school and the wider community	Yes
The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being	
There is provision to promote learners' basic skills	Yes
Learners have opportunities to develop enterprise skills and work in teams	Yes
Careers education and guidance is provided to all learners in key stage 3 and 4 and the sixth form	NA
Education for all learners aged 14–19 provides an understanding of employment and the economy	NA

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

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Mr Alan Rutter

Robert Ferguson Primary School

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9 March 2006

Dear Pupils

Thank you for the welcome you gave Mrs Dodd, Mr Oglesby and myself when we visited your school recently. We enjoyed meeting you and really appreciated the help you gave us, especially in sharing your work and ideas about the school.

We think that your teachers and the other staff work very hard to help you with your work and all the other activities which the school provides. They are very concerned to make sure that you get on well together, and we were pleased to see how well you behaved. We thought that the work of the Jigsaw Project has helped you all to work together and to help one another.

We have asked the teachers to do some things to make sure that you are able to reach good standards by the time you leave Year 6. These are:

to improve the work in literacy, numeracy and science

to make sure that you have clear targets for your work in all classes, just as there are in some at the moment

to make sure that you know how well you are doing and how to improve your work in the future.

With all good wishes for your future success.

Yours sincerely

Martin Bradley

Her Majesty's Inspector