



Ropery Walk Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 113993
LEA Durham
Inspection number 279291
Inspection dates 16 November 2005 to 17 November 2005
Reporting inspector Mr Andrew Scott

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Ropery Walk
School category	Community		Seaham
Age range of pupils	4 to 11		County Durham, SR7 7JZ
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	0191 581 3959
Number on roll	215	Fax number	0191 581 1734
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mrs G Bleasdale
Date of previous inspection	1 September 1999	Headteacher	Mr S Marshall

Age group 4 to 11	Inspection dates 16 November 2005 - 17 November 2005	Inspection number 279291
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors.

Description of the school

This is an average-sized primary school in a coastal town which has some areas of deprivation. Virtually all pupils are from White British families and the pupil population is fairly static. Most children begin school with skills and abilities that are below average. The number of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is higher than average. The current headteacher has been in post for only a short time.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

The school provides a satisfactory education for its pupils. This differs from the school's view that it is good, but inspectors agree that the school is developing well at present and has a good capacity to go on improving. The clear direction and infectious enthusiasm of the headteacher have given the school a renewed sense of purpose and given the staff a collective will to improve. The quality of education in the Foundation Stage is satisfactory. Children achieve satisfactorily in the Reception class, but do not reach the goals expected of them by the end of the year. By Year 6, standards are average in English, but below average in mathematics and science, mainly because the more able pupils do not achieve as well as they could. Nevertheless, overall achievement is satisfactory.

Teaching is satisfactory overall, but mainly good in Years 1, 2, 5, and 6 because the teachers expect more of learners. Pupils are keen to learn and they work hard in lessons; their behaviour is excellent. Their personal development is good, especially their appreciation of healthy living. The curriculum is satisfactory overall, but the extra activities, visits and links with the community make an outstanding contribution to pupils' learning. The school does not give pupils enough scope to work independently, and it could do more to develop literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT) across the curriculum. It takes good care of its pupils and they rightly feel secure and happy. Governance is satisfactory but governors are not doing enough to check how well the school is performing. Overall, though, the school is good at recognising its strengths and pinpointing the right areas for development. As a result, it has made good progress since the last inspection, particularly in its leadership and management. In view of pupils' achievement, the school gives satisfactory value for money.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise pupils' standards in mathematics and science by providing work that consistently challenges all pupils, especially the more able.
- Provide more scope for pupils to work independently and to extend their skills in literacy, numeracy and ICT through other subjects.
- Ensure that the governing body plays a more decisive part in monitoring and evaluating the school's progress.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

The school is right in judging pupils' achievement as satisfactory. Children enter school with below average abilities, especially in language, and make satisfactory progress in the Reception year. This means that they do not achieve the goals expected of them and they enter Year 1 with attainment still below average. By Year 2, pupils are currently achieving well because most teaching is good in Years 1 and 2. Standards are average in reading and writing, but in mathematics they are below average because too few

pupils are likely to achieve the higher grades. By Year 6, pupils achieve satisfactorily overall. Recent disruptions to staffing helps to explain why standards in mathematics and science are below average. In addition, teachers do not consistently expect enough of pupils, especially the more able and do not encourage them enough to use their own initiative in learning. In English, however, pupils achieve well and gain average standards because teaching focuses well on a new system of targets based on pupils' individual needs. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities achieve satisfactorily, helped by extra support in lessons. This is mostly satisfactory, but often good when teaching assistants are skilfully deployed.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Inspectors support the school's view that pupils develop well as individuals. Pupils clearly appreciate and enjoy their school; their good attendance underlines this. They work hard in lessons and are proud of what they do. They get on very well together and with adults, and are considerate and mature in their outlook. It is not surprising, therefore, that their behaviour is outstanding.

Pupils are justified in saying that they feel very safe in school. They know precisely what to do if they are troubled and that teachers quickly sort out any problems. They rightly appreciate that the school's very good counselling service helps them overcome personal worries. They develop good self-esteem and a broad awareness of their own and other cultures. Overall, pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Teachers use a range of exciting activities to ensure that pupils have an excellent understanding of the importance of a healthy lifestyle. Pupils do not yet have enough say in the running of the school, although they know that the school welcomes and acts on their ideas, such as fundraising for victims of natural disasters. Plans for a school council are well advanced.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall, but mainly good in Years 1, 2, 5 and 6. In all classrooms, teachers create a good working atmosphere so that pupils want to work and wish to succeed. Similarly, teachers' high expectations of behaviour pay dividends, and pupils do not need constant supervision when working on their own. In addition, teachers present new work skilfully so that pupils know exactly what they need to learn.

Where teaching is good, teachers have better expectations of pupils and they maintain a brisker pace of learning in lessons. Teachers generate momentum in lessons and set clear deadlines so that pupils work quickly to complete their tasks. Importantly, they match work well to different needs so that pupils feel challenged. In the Reception class, Years 3 and 4, and sometimes elsewhere, teaching and learning are satisfactory.

Teachers do not expect enough from their pupils, especially the more able pupils. For example, in a Year 6 mathematics lesson, all pupils had to practise their times tables, even though some pupils already knew them. Sometimes, the pace of lessons is too flat to motivate pupils fully.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

Inspectors agree with the school that the enrichment of the curriculum is outstanding. However, the overall curriculum is satisfactory. Throughout the school, each subject has a satisfactory framework, and teachers are gradually becoming more flexible in their approach. The good emphasis on learning the basic skills in literacy and numeracy is preparing pupils more soundly for their future education and life. The range of visits, visitors and activities, as well as the extensive links with the community, means that pupils are able to broaden their horizons appreciably. The new accommodation for sports, and also for art and design, is an added bonus. However, pupils miss valuable opportunities to extend their literacy, numeracy and ICT because teachers do not link subjects together enough. Furthermore, pupils have too few opportunities to develop independent learning skills. This is especially true for more able pupils, whose curriculum is not consistently tailored to their needs.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Inspectors agree that the school takes good care of its pupils. There are secure procedures for child protection and to ensure that pupils play and work safely. The strong emphasis on a sensible diet and regular exercise helps them to adopt healthy lifestyles. Good links with outside agencies, such as speech therapists, ensure that pupils get all the specialist support they may need. Pupils greatly appreciate the quality of care they receive. Very good links with other schools strengthen teaching, the curriculum and transfer to secondary education. Parents are extremely supportive of the school and feel that their opinions are respected and acted upon.

The school has satisfactory systems for checking how well pupils progress. Teachers, therefore, know where pupils need guidance, and they set appropriate targets for improvement. This has been successful in English and is just being applied to mathematics. The marking of pupils' work is satisfactory, but the school is striving to encourage teachers to be more consistent.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Inspectors agree with the school that it is well led and managed. All staff share the headteacher's clear vision for the school. In his short time in post, his sensible ideas and creative energy have already strengthened the school. Its happy atmosphere inspires pupils to work hard. Senior teachers have an increasing influence on their

areas of responsibility; aspects of the curriculum are exciting, and links with the community are robust. As a result, standards are beginning to improve.

The school is well aware of its strengths and areas for improvement. An analysis of pupils' writing, for example, revealed exactly why standards have been low. The school has the right priorities to improve, although plans are not all sharply focused for best effect. The plans to improve numeracy, for example, do not spell out how to develop pupils' mental agility. The school uses its funds shrewdly to benefit the pupils, as can be seen in the new security fencing.

Governance is satisfactory. Governors work hard and are supportive of the school. However, because they lack awareness of its shortcomings, they do not hold it to account rigorously enough.

The school has made good progress since the last inspection. Leadership and management have improved; the educational direction is clearer, and development planning is better. Strengths, such as pupils' behaviour, have been maintained and the key issues have essentially been tackled. The school is developing well and is in good shape to improve further.

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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?	3	NA
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1	NA
The quality and standards in foundation stage	3	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2	NA
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	Yes	NA
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	NA

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3	NA
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3	NA
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3	NA
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	3	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	2	NA
The behaviour of learners	1	NA
The attendance of learners	2	NA
How well learners enjoy their education	2	NA
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	NA
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1	NA
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2	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?	2	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?	2	NA
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2	NA
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	2	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	3	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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Ropery Walk Primary School

Ropery Walk

Seaham

County Durham

SL7 7JZ

19 November 2005

Dear Children

Thank you for the part you played in the inspection of your school. We very much enjoyed meeting you and getting to know your school.

We believe your school gives you a satisfactory education and has many strengths:

you are extremely well-behaved, thoughtful and good at carrying out your jobs

you do well in English and you should be proud of having improved your writing

your headteacher has improved your school; has the right ideas to make your school better, and is well supported by all the staff

your teachers ensure you learn the right things, especially in Years 1, 2, 5 and 6

you benefit from some exciting visits, visitors, links with the community and other activities

the school takes good care of you and we understand why you say that you feel safe at school; you also know very well how to live and eat healthily

you clearly like coming to school because your attendance is good.

However, we feel that the school could still improve in three ways:

teachers need to make sure that your work in lessons always challenges you, so that your standards in mathematics and science are as good as they are in English, especially for those of you who find these subjects easy

teachers could improve your skills in literacy, numeracy and ICT by using them more in other subjects; you also need to have more chances to work on your own and explore your own ideas

your governors need to be more involved in the school.

I wish you and your school every success for the future.

Yours sincerely,

Andrew Scott AllLead Inspector

Annex B