

# Rookhope Primary School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	114063
<b>Local Authority</b>	Durham
<b>Inspection number</b>	289798
<b>Inspection date</b>	19 April 2007
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Kathryn Dodd

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 on roll</b>	
School	29
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mrs Brenda Lonsdale
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs Alison Aitchison
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	1 March 2003
<b>School address</b>	Rookhope Bishop Auckland County Durham DL13 2DA
<b>Telephone number</b>	01388 517268
<b>Fax number</b>	01388 517036

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<b>Age group</b>	4–11
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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

## Description of the school

Almost all the pupils attending this very small village school are from White British family backgrounds. It serves a widespread rural area. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is above average, as is the proportion of pupils who join the school partway through their primary education. Pupils are taught in two mixed-age classes.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 2

This good school has an accurate view of its effectiveness and provides good value for money. Parents, rightly, say that it is a caring and welcoming school, where children are valued as individuals and grow in self-confidence. Staff make sure that pupils enjoy learning, stay safe and healthy and make a positive contribution to the daily life of the school and wider communities. Consequently, pupils' good personal development gives pupils good attitudes to learning, valuable skills in making relationships and good behaviour. These combine to give pupils a head start with their education.

Very small numbers of pupils in each year group mean that standards are extremely variable from year to year. However, pupils, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, achieve well from their starting points. As a result of good teaching and learning and a good curriculum, standards by Year 6 are above average. The standards and quality of provision in the Foundation Stage (Reception year) are good. Pupils throughout the school make greater gains in mathematics and reading than in they do in writing. This is because they do not have enough opportunities to practise their writing skills during their work in other subjects. In literacy and numeracy lessons, teachers plan and provide work that enables pupils to build well upon what they already know and can do, regardless of the widely varying ages and capabilities of pupils in each class. Teachers involve pupils effectively in understanding how to improve their work. They do not always apply these good practices across other subjects of the curriculum and this means that the more capable pupils are sometimes insufficiently challenged by their work.

The good leadership of the headteacher makes a significant contribution to the school's success. By enlisting the support of everyone in school and establishing effective partnerships with parents and the community, she has created a strong sense of common purpose and clarity of vision for raising pupils' achievement further. As a result, the school has accurately pinpointed the right priorities for improvement and some success is already evident, particularly in the improved rate of pupils' progress in mathematics. The school has made good improvement since the previous inspection and there is good capacity amongst the leadership team, staff and governors to secure further improvement in the future.

### What the school should do to improve further

- Provide more opportunities for pupils to practise and improve their writing skills across all subjects.
- Plan work that tightly matches the varying ages and, in particular, the needs of the more capable in all subjects.

## Achievement and standards

### Grade: 2

The achievement of most pupils is good, and they meet the challenging targets that teachers set for them. When children start school, their attainment is often below average, particularly in literacy skills. They make good progress across the school, so that by Year 6, standards are above average. Standards are, however, extremely variable from year to year because of the very small numbers of pupils and fluctuating proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. This makes it very difficult for the school to use national test data to find out how well it is doing. Recent changes in tracking pupils' progress have resulted in changes

to the curriculum, so that it builds more accurately on pupils' prior attainment, particularly in mathematics, where progress is accelerating. Although pupils' progress in English is good, they make greater gains in reading than in writing. Initiatives to improve pupils' writing, especially for older pupils, are starting to pay dividends. Nevertheless, progress in writing is limited by a lack of opportunities to apply new writing skills to work across other subjects of the curriculum. Although at least satisfactory, the progress of the more capable pupils is sometimes held back in subjects, other than English and mathematics, when their work is insufficiently challenging.

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 2**

Pupils' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Good personal, social and emotional development in the Foundation Stage enables children to settle easily into school life. From this point, pupils grow in confidence and mature into confident young citizens, well prepared for life beyond school. Pupils express opinions confidently because adults value highly their contributions to discussions. Pupils say that this motivates them to try hard, do their best and rise to the high expectations held of them.

Consequently, pupils enjoy school, behave well and have good attitudes to learning. Occasionally, however, pupils find it more difficult to concentrate on activities when working independently. Pupils develop a keen sense of social responsibility. They delight in taking on responsibilities to make their school a happier, safer, healthier and brighter place. Buddies, mini buddies and peer mediators take their responsibilities seriously; for example, helping other pupils to feel safe. Pupils know how to keep fit and can explain why it is sensible to eat healthily. Attendance is broadly average, but can fluctuate widely from year to year.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 2**

Pupils make good progress because of good teaching and learning. Positive relationships, infectious enthusiasm, good organisation and interesting activities are strong features of most of the teaching. The very small number of pupils in each class provides frequent opportunities for pupils to respond individually to the challenging questioning by teachers. Consequently, pupils are eager, attentive and behave well. Teachers respond well to the challenge of teaching a wide range of ages and capabilities. They deploy teaching assistants thoughtfully to ensure that pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress. In literacy and mathematics lessons, teachers use their frequent assessments of what pupils can already do well to plan and provide work that tightly matches pupils' differing learning needs. They set realistic but challenging learning targets and mark work so that pupils are clear about how to improve. However, these good practices are not always a feature of teaching and learning in other subjects. As a result, pupils' work does not always challenge their thinking sufficiently, particularly in the case of the more capable pupils.

### **Curriculum and other activities**

#### **Grade: 2**

The curriculum, including the Foundation Stage, enables pupils to make good progress. A high priority is given to providing an enriched curriculum that enlivens learning and promotes good personal development. Effective partnerships, in the locality and further field, ensure that

pupils develop a good understanding of the world beyond home and school. This is reflected by the school's recent Intermediate International School award. The curriculum gives good attention to improving pupils' literacy and numeracy skills. Recent refinements are leading to improved achievement and standards, particularly in mental calculations in mathematics. A strong focus on providing a more creative curriculum to inspire and motivate pupils to improve their writing, together with a good range of support programmes to boost handwriting skills, are contributing to the good progress that pupils have started to make. However, there remains scope for pupils to have further opportunities to practise their writing skills across the subjects of the curriculum. The school also does well in providing a good quality curriculum for physical education, which is reflected in the gaining of the ActiveMark Award. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress because of carefully tailored and flexible support programmes.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 2**

Staff know pupils extremely well and work as a united team to ensure equally good standards of care for all. Consequently, parents often move their children to the school partway through their primary education. They particularly appreciate the individual support their children receive in academic learning and personal development. Pupils show great concern for one another and are confident that adults or peers are always on hand to help them to overcome difficulties. This, along with good procedures for safeguarding pupils and close attention to their health and safety, ensures that pupils feel safe in school. Teachers make good use of information about pupils' attainment in order to set future learning targets and to guide pupils through meeting them. Although this is often successful, practices are not yet consistent across subjects this sometimes limits their impact on pupils' achievement, particularly for some more capable pupils.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 2**

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A strong sense of unity and teamwork underpins the good leadership, management and governance of the school. The caring and nurturing ethos ensures that pupils enjoy learning and achieve high academic and personal standards. Although maintaining a major teaching role, the headteacher takes significant responsibility for initiating and leading developments. She has an accurate view of school's strengths and knows where improvement is needed. By enlisting the help of staff, governors, pupils and parents, she has created a common sense of purpose and a shared vision. This has led the school competently through a challenging period of essential building alterations, budgetary difficulties and staffing changes.

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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	<b>School Overall</b>
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### Overall effectiveness

<b>How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?</b>	2
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

### Achievement and standards

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

### Personal development and well-being

<b>How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The behaviour of learners	2
The attendance of learners	3
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	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	2

### The quality of provision

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?</b>	2
<b>How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?</b>	2
<b>How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?</b>	2

<sup>1</sup> 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**

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	2
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 performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2
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

19 April 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Rookhope Primary School, County Durham, DL13 2DA

Thank you so much for the very warm welcome you gave me when I visited your school. You were all really friendly and polite and keen to talk to me. You answered all my questions really thoughtfully. I can see why you told me that you enjoy coming to your school and why your parents are pleased with it. All the adults care about you and want you to do well. It is good to hear that, if you have any problems or are upset about anything, there is always either an adult or a classmate on hand to talk to and get help. This is one of the reasons why you are so happy at school. You have a particularly good understanding of how life in other places in Britain and around the world is very different to where you live and go to school.

Your school is a good school, and everyone is working hard together to make it even better. I have asked teachers and governors to:

- make sure that you get even more chances to practise your writing in all subjects, so that you do as well in writing as you do in reading and mathematics
- make sure that your work in all subjects is never too easy for you, and that it always gives you the chance to show what you are capable of.

You can help your school to become even better by understanding and remembering what you learn and by checking what you still have to do to improve your work. When you are doing your work without an adult alongside you, you should try even harder to concentrate on what you have been asked to learn. You should also tell your teacher if your work is too easy or too hard for you, and of course, continue to try your very best in everything that you do.

I wish you all the very best for the future.

Yours sincerely

Kathryn Dodd

Lead inspector