



# Roebuck Primary School and Nursery

Inspection Report

---

**Unique Reference Number** 133263  
**Local Authority** HERTFORDSHIRE  
**Inspection number** 294050  
**Inspection dates** 23–24 January 2007  
**Reporting inspector** Nichola Perry

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

---

<b>Type of school</b>	Primary	<b>School address</b>	St Margarets
<b>School category</b>	Community		Stevenage
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3–11		Hertfordshire SG2 8RG
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed	<b>Telephone number</b>	01438 352924
<b>Number on roll (school)</b>	222	<b>Fax number</b>	01438 740807
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body	<b>Chair</b>	Mrs Monika Cherney-Craw
		<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs Jenn Phelps
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	24 February 2003		

---

<b>Age group</b> 3–11	<b>Inspection dates</b> 23–24 January 2007	<b>Inspection number</b> 294050
--------------------------	---	------------------------------------

---

---

© Crown copyright 2007

Website: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

## Description of the school

This is a slightly smaller than average school serving an area that is socially mixed. It has become single form entry in all year groups except in Year 6, following amalgamation in 2001. Most pupils are White British with a few from minority ethnic backgrounds. Attainment on entry to the Nursery is below levels expected for this age group. The school has above average proportions of pupils with significant learning difficulties or disabilities. A small number of pupils speak English as an additional language.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 2

This is an effective school. As a result of the headteacher's relentless drive for improvement, there has been significant progress since the previous inspection. The headteacher, ably supported by her deputy headteacher, provides strong leadership.

The care and support offered to all pupils, but especially vulnerable pupils and their families, is outstanding. Pupils are given good academic advice and have clear targets to help them improve, although they are not yet consistently involved in assessing their own performance. Relationships are very good and pupils love coming to school. They feel safe and secure and are totally confident that their teachers will help them sort out any problems they may experience. Personal development is good. All staff provide excellent role models for pupils and strong emphasis is placed on tolerance and acceptance of each others' differences. Pupils show clear understanding of how to keep fit, healthy and safe and how to eat sensibly. Behaviour is well managed and, as a result, the behaviour of most pupils is good. Procedures for ensuring the safety and welfare of pupils are well established and robust and parents are very pleased with the school.

Pupils get off to a good start in the Nursery. There is particularly strong emphasis on teaching communication, language, personal and social skills and this helps children to achieve well. Pupils continue to make good progress as they move further up the school. Standards by Year 2 and Year 6 are average in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science. Achievement is good in relation to pupils' low starting points. Although standards are improving, there are still too few pupils attaining the higher levels and this reflects the high proportion of pupils with significant learning difficulties, particularly in Years 3 to 6.

Teaching, learning and support are good overall. In a few lessons, some aspects of teaching show flashes of outstanding practice, whilst some, less experienced, staff are not yet providing consistently good teaching in all lessons. Teachers make learning interesting and plan a range of activities which match the needs of all pupils well. A key factor in pupils' ongoing good achievement across the school is the good use of half-termly assessment and tracking of progress.

The curriculum is good and enriched well by use of the super school grounds and the local environment. There is a wide range of additional activities to add both interest and the opportunity to experience activities unlikely to be experienced otherwise, such as learning to play steel pans. The use of information and communication technology (ICT) is enhancing pupils' visual learning and contributing to their good achievement. Links across subjects are being made but there is no plan which formalises this to ensure that essential skills are being taught systematically.

Leadership, management and value for money are good. Governors are supportive and understand the school's strengths and weaknesses. Regular and rigorous monitoring and analysis of all aspects of the school's performance means that senior staff and subject leaders have a secure evaluation of how well the school is doing and what

needs to improve. This, along with strong teamwork and total commitment to the school, has led to rapid improvement and good capacity to improve further.

### **What the school should do to improve further**

- Further raise standards in English, particularly in writing, and mathematics by ensuring that teaching and learning are consistently good across the school.
- Develop a plan that shows how basic skills are taught systematically and progressively across all subjects.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 2**

All pupils, including those with learning difficulties, achieve well. The school has introduced a range of strategies to encourage confidence in talking and a love of writing so as to improve pupils' skills. As a result, children do well in the Nursery and Reception classes, particularly in basic language, communication and social skills. Although there is evidence of improvement in all areas of learning because of the ongoing focus on literacy and language development, the number of children achieving the early learning goals by the end of Reception remains below average. Standards in Year 2 are broadly average and have risen over the past three years in reading and mathematics, but declined in writing. In the current Year 2, more pupils are working at average standards in all three areas. Pupils make good progress by Year 6, compared with their results in Year 2, when they reach at least average, and sometimes higher, standards in English, mathematics and science. Results in the Year 6 national tests, although variable, have risen in recent years. Changing numbers of pupils with significant learning difficulties each year are reflected in the variable test results.

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

### **Grade: 2**

Pupils thoroughly enjoy school which is reflected in improved attendance. They have positive attitudes to learning, beginning in the Nursery where interest and excitement in learning is well promoted through a stimulating range of activities. Pupils feel safe in school and have confidence in the help and support of the staff. Relationships are excellent throughout the school. Pupils value the hard-working staff and say things like 'All the teachers are kind and teach you lots of nice things'. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Their understanding of each others' differences is enhanced through sharing their personal and cultural experiences. Staff work hard to encourage pupils to lead healthy lifestyles and the many opportunities to be involved in sports adds to this understanding. Pupils have good opportunities to make a contribution to the school community through, for example, the school council. They are encouraged to be independent and enterprising and are involved in decision-making within the school. This prepares them well for later life.

## Quality of provision

### Teaching and learning

#### Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are good overall, but not consistently so. Staff work hard to motivate pupils and make learning both interesting and fun. The use of interactive whiteboards is helping in this respect, for example, by using a silent film to encourage pupils to imagine being a character and writing a play script to match the actions in the film. Teachers are effective in establishing excellent relationships with their pupils by valuing all contributions and this develops pupils' confidence and raises their self-esteem. This, along with good use of support staff, contributes strongly to motivating pupils and helping them to achieve well. Teachers generally manage behaviour well, although there are pupils who struggle to be good listeners and good learners when some teachers are not consistent in their expectations of pupils and learning is, therefore, only satisfactory in these lessons.

### Curriculum and other activities

#### Grade: 2

As well as meeting statutory requirements, the curriculum is thoughtfully planned to ensure that all groups of pupils build their skills through a broad range of interesting experiences. There is good emphasis on teaching basic skills in English, mathematics and ICT, although there is no clear plan to ensure these are taught systematically and progressively across other subjects. Pupils who need extra help are provided for well. The school organises a wide range of after-school activities which are well attended. Pupils enjoy the many opportunities to go on educational visits, and visitors who come in to school, for example, artists or writers who work with the children, further enhance their learning. ICT is a developing strength of the school, with many opportunities for pupils to use computers and other technology to support their learning. There is much high quality art work to be seen around the school and many opportunities for the pupils to learn musical instruments.

### Care, guidance and support

#### Grade: 2

Care, guidance and support are good with some outstanding features. Staff know individual pupils very well and respond quickly to any concerns that arise. Pupils who have learning or behavioural needs or other difficulties are extremely well supported and do well as a result of specific provision by teachers and able teaching assistants. Required procedures to ensure pupils' health, safety and welfare are in place and are regularly reviewed. New pupils are helped to settle in and quickly feel part of the school. The provision of care before and after school, as well as the lunchtime club, is welcomed by parents and enjoyed by pupils. Parents appreciate the support the school provides for them and their children and say things like 'If I were asked to recommend a primary school to new parents, I wouldn't hesitate in suggesting Roebuck as first

choice'. Teachers check pupils' academic progress regularly and there are targets set in mathematics and English so that pupils understand what they need to learn next. However, pupils are not yet fully involved in assessing their own work in all classes.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 2**

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher and her staff are strongly committed to improvement and care deeply about their pupils. The senior leadership team is effective and there is a strong sense of teamwork within the school. This has ensured that the three newly qualified teachers feel very much a part of that team, enabling them to make a positive start to their careers. Subject leaders are similarly committed and show a clear sense of direction and understanding of their roles. They all work well together and it is clear there is no complacency or fear of challenge. There is effective analysis of performance at all levels and discussions with senior staff and subject leaders show just how well they know their school. Use of a wide range of external agencies is effective in developing the outstanding care of pupils, both within the school and in the wider community. Governors are supportive and a well organised team. They carry out their roles effectively and committees challenge the school's performance, although their active involvement in the strategic planning and evaluation is not yet fully established.

**Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaints about school inspection', which is available from Ofsted's website: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk).**



## Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	<b>School Overall</b>
---	-----------------------

### 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	3
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.

## 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

24 January 2007

Dear Pupils

Roebuck Primary School and Nursery, St Margaret's, Stevenage, Hertfordshire SG2 8RG

This letter is to thank you for all your help when the inspection team visited your school recently and to tell you what we found during our visit. We especially want to thank the pupils who gave up some of their lunchtime to talk to us about their views and the work of the school council.

We found that you make good progress in your lessons and you develop into mature and sensible young people. Children in the Nursery get off to a great start to their time in school and the rest of you continue to achieve well right up to Year 6 so that you are well prepared for going to secondary school. Those of you who need extra help in lessons or with your behaviour are cared for very well. We would like the teachers to keep helping you to reach higher standards in English and mathematics because these subjects are really important for the rest of your lives. Your teachers work very hard to make learning fun and interesting and plan activities which really help you to learn well. They also make sure that you practise your literacy and numeracy skills in other lessons too, but we would like to see you doing more of this and more often. Some lessons are not quite as good as the rest and we have asked your headteacher to keep trying to make sure you are all taught as well as possible.

We think you are really lucky to come to this school. You have lots of space inside and even more outside and it is all looked after so well. We hope the snow and cold weather go away very soon so that you can get out onto the playing fields and your super climbing frame.

Good luck for the future.

Best wishes

Nichola Perry

Lead inspector