

# Robert Ferguson Primary School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	112242
<b>Local Authority</b>	Cumbria
<b>Inspection number</b>	295378
<b>Inspection dates</b>	14–15 May 2007
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Stephen Isherwood HMI

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>	3–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School	335
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mr Chris Southward
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr Alan Rutter
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	1 March 2006
<b>School address</b>	East Dale Street Carlisle Cumbria CA2 5LA
<b>Telephone number</b>	01228 607528
<b>Fax number</b>	01228 607529

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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

This is a larger than average sized school, situated to the south west of Carlisle. The area served by the school is of mixed housing. The vast majority of children are of White British heritage with a small number from minority ethnic groups. Eight children are at an early stage of learning to speak English. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is above average. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below average. When children start school their attainment is well below that expected for their age. Following its previous inspection in 2006, the school was judged to require a Notice to Improve.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 3

In accordance with section 13 (5) of the Education Act 2005, HMCI is of the opinion that this school no longer requires significant improvement.

Since the last inspection, when its effectiveness was judged to be inadequate, the school has worked successfully to raise pupils' standards and achievement, and to improve leadership. Inspectors agree with the school's self evaluation that it now provides a satisfactory and improving education for its pupils and has some good features. It provides satisfactory value for money and has good capacity to improve further. Leadership is now satisfactory. This is because of the drive and commitment of senior staff to raise standards and the positive, receptive way the school has acted on the advice and support from the local authority. For example, procedures are now more effective for assessing the effectiveness of the school's performance and for setting challenging targets for pupils. As a result, senior leaders are more focused on raising achievement and have a clearer view of how well pupils are learning.

The findings of the previous inspection, described by senior teachers as a 'wake up call', have pulled the staff together and galvanised them to act more decisively. As a consequence, there is clear agreement on what needs to be improved, teamwork is strong and plans of good quality are in place to push the school forward.

Pupils are now reaching average standards by the end of Year 2 and Year 6 and their achievement is satisfactory overall. Given that children start school with knowledge and skills well below that which is typical for their age, they make good progress from the moment they enter the Foundation Stage to the end of Year 2 where standards are broadly average. This is because of good teaching in the early years along with curriculum experiences that are well planned to capture the interest and enthusiasm of all learners. Progress in Key Stage 2 is satisfactory; pupils lose some ground compared to the promise they showed in previous years. This is because learning experiences in some lessons are not sufficiently engaging, particularly for higher achieving pupils. While progress in learning is satisfactory overall, the school is aware that pupils have the potential to make more rapid progress in mathematics. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress because their needs are quickly identified and the support they receive is of high quality.

This is a school that has strong relationships, takes good care of its pupils and where every child is given opportunity to take part in what is offered. Pupils make good strides in their personal development. This means that pupils enjoy coming to school, feel safe, behave well and get on well with each other. They have a good awareness of keeping fit and eating healthily, through a wide range of opportunities and activities. Older pupils take good care of younger ones and, through the school council; they make a positive contribution to school life. Parents are very supportive and appreciate the good standards of care and guidance that the school provides.

Teaching is satisfactory overall with some that is good. In the best lessons, activities are challenging, learning is shared and pupils are enthusiastic and motivated to succeed, which results in high levels of enjoyment. Tasks are well chosen and pupils are provided with clear opportunities to take responsibility for their own learning. In some of the less successful lessons, the range of teaching styles is limited, activities are too directed and pupils are not fully engaged in many of the activities, which results in pupils making slower progress. Some of the higher attaining pupils are not challenged enough.

## What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that pupils make more rapid progress in mathematics
- Broaden the range of teaching strategies to stimulate pupils' greater involvement in learning.
- Plan more challenging activities, especially for the higher attaining pupils.

A small proportion of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

## Achievement and standards

### Grade: 3

Pupils' current work, as well as the school's data, shows standards are broadly average and pupils' achievement is satisfactory. This is because the school has made good progress in the time since it was judged to require a Notice to Improve and achievement and standards were not good enough.

When children start school, many have skills which are well below what is typical for their age, particularly in language and communication. The good provision in the Foundation Stage ensures that children settle quickly and achieve well. By the end of the Reception Year, many are on course to reach the learning goals expected of them. This represents good progress given their starting points on entry to the Nursery. Pupils continue to achieve well to reach standards that are broadly in line with the national average by the end of Year 2. In the 2006 assessments, standards were broadly average in reading and mathematics but below average in writing.

Work in lessons and pupils' books confirms that progress is satisfactory in Years 3 to 6. Whilst standards were below average, as reflected in the 2006 test results for Year 6, the progress pupils make in relation to their capabilities is satisfactory overall. The school's data indicate that most Year 6 pupils are now working close to the levels expected for their age although the progress pupils make in mathematics is not as rapid as it is in English because information from assessments is not always used effectively to plan practical and investigative activities.

## Personal development and well-being

### Grade: 2

The school has sustained its strength in this aspect of its work and has accurately judged its good quality. Pupils are thoughtful, polite and display strong attitudes to their learning. Their attendance is satisfactory. Provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. A rich range of experiences, including circle time and individual chats with adults, develops their understanding of themselves and their place in the world. As a consequence, pupils behave well, and are caring and considerate towards each other. They have a good understanding of healthy lifestyles and participate well in a range of sporting and physical activities. They are also aware of the importance of a healthy diet and exercise. Gaining the Healthy Schools and ActiveMark awards confirms the school's strong commitment to pupils' health and well-being. Pupils said that they feel safe and secure in school and are happy to attend. This is because teachers are caring and vigilant, and relationships are strong. Individuals are well supported when they are distressed or unhappy. Pupils are confident about approaching adults if problems arise and know that solutions will be found. They enjoy their work in lessons and speak enthusiastically about themed weeks, general activities and specific partnerships,

such as the project to help children in India. They raise substantial funds for charities and are proud to go out into the community to sing for senior citizens. Pupils play an active role in decision making through the school council and feel that their views are taken into account.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 3**

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. Common strengths lie in the warm relationships staff have with their pupils and the efficient manner in which lessons are planned and managed. In the best lessons, teaching and learning are a shared experience with pupils able to play an active part in the lesson. In one such mathematics lesson, pupils increased their understanding of the conversion of fractions to decimals by working with a 'talk' partner. When teachers focus pupils' attention through practical activities and exciting presentations, pupils work hard and move on in their learning. In these lessons, the pace is brisk, expectations are high and the work is challenging. Teaching assistants are thoroughly prepared and support pupils' learning well. Too many lessons, however, lack sparkle, variety and challenge with the result that pupils' learning is often limited. More able pupils fare less well. Teaching is often slow because it is not focused on the quality of pupils' learning and interaction.

Although the marking of work checks the extent to which the pupils have understood the lesson, it does not always show pupils exactly how to improve their work.

### **Curriculum and other activities**

#### **Grade: 3**

The school provides a satisfactory curriculum that meets statutory requirements. For the most part, it is carefully planned and organised to meet the needs of most learners. However, the curriculum is not always planned consistently well to challenge all pupils. Since the last inspection, the school has placed a strong emphasis on revising the curriculum to improve the teaching of literacy and numeracy by introducing a range of strategies to help pupils who are not making enough progress. These classes have been successful in raising achievement, particularly for pupils with additional learning needs. The Foundation Stage curriculum is well planned and children make good progress as a result of a good balance of teacher-led and child-chosen activities. Good provision for personal, social, health education ensures that pupils are given plenty of opportunities to discuss their feelings and emotions.

The school offers a wide range of extracurricular provision. Pupils enjoy the skills brought to the school by visiting experts including artists and sport professionals. Opportunities for pupils to learn Spanish and Italian add enrichment to the pupils' experience of school and to their personal development.

The curriculum is being reviewed to develop pupils' creativity and make learning more real and exciting. At present, there are too few opportunities for pupils to use their writing skills and practise their speaking and listening in other subjects.

### **Care, guidance and support**

#### **Grade: 2**

The school takes good care of its pupils, who say they feel safe and well cared for. Careful attention is given to the needs of vulnerable pupils and the school provides them with good

personal support. For example, the 'Jigsaw project' is very successful in encouraging pupils' social and emotional development and in raising their self esteem. Good links with the local high school underpin the good arrangements to support the pupils' transition to secondary school.

Procedures are now in place to set learning targets and also to monitor pupils' progress. Teachers are increasingly aware of individual pupils' needs and are now able to identify pupils who are not making sufficient progress and take action. However, at present, information is not always put to best use to plan consistently challenging and demanding tasks, especially for more able pupils. Parents are not always clear about how well their children are progressing in their work.

The school reports that all required procedures are in place to ensure the safety of pupils in school and on educational visits.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 3**

Leadership and management are satisfactory with some areas of strength. This represents good progress since the 2006 inspection when both were judged to be inadequate. School leaders provide a clear vision and are determined to push the school forward. They are well supported by an equally committed team of dedicated staff and governors who share the sense of purpose and direction. As a result, there is a strong sense of ownership, teamwork is strong and staff are open and receptive to new ideas. For example, the leadership team has taken every opportunity to benefit from the advice and support from local authority consultants, who are currently working with staff on a programme aimed at raising standards in English and mathematics.

The school has made good progress in the way it monitors and evaluates its performance. Systems for checking on the quality of teaching are more rigorous. Procedures for target setting and the tracking of pupil performance are much improved. Teachers are increasingly confident in using the information to plan suitable activities to match the needs of learners. As a result, standards are rising and the achievement of pupils is now satisfactory.

The whole school commitment to improvement and the positive way in which the school acts upon advice contribute to the school's good capacity to improve.

The leadership team is not complacent and has worked with energy and enthusiasm to get the school back on track. They have a sound understanding of what needs to be improved and are aware of where further improvements are required. For example, senior staff have correctly identified that pupils could make more rapid progress in mathematics and that higher achieving pupils could do better.

The leadership for pupils with additional learning needs is outstanding and as a consequence pupils make good progress. This is because the self esteem of learners is extremely well developed and procedures for setting targets for these pupils are very effective.

Governors offer satisfactory support and are well informed. They are fully committed to supporting the school and fulfil their statutory responsibilities well. They have a clear understanding of the agenda for improvement and are developing their confidence in monitoring and evaluating the work of the school.

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## Annex A

## Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	<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>	3
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	3
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
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>	3
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3
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	3

### The quality of provision

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?</b>	3
<b>How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?</b>	3
<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>	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	3
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3
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**

16 May 2007

Dear Children

Inspection of Robert Ferguson Primary School, Cumbria, CA2 5LA

As you know, Mrs Elton, Mrs Sewell and I visited your school recently to find out how well you are learning. We enjoyed our two days with you and thank you for being so polite and friendly. You made us very welcome. I am writing to let you know what we found out.

Firstly, we would like to tell you that your school no longer needs a Notice to Improve. I am pleased to tell you that the school is now giving you a satisfactory education and that it has improved well in a short period of time. This is because your teachers have worked very hard to make sure that you learn well and reach higher standards than before.

It was pleasing to see that you work hard in lessons, behave well and get on with each other. You feel safe, are well cared for and show concern for others less fortunate than yourselves through your fundraising. You have a good awareness of how to keep fit and healthy.

The staff and governors are working hard to make the school even better. We are sure that with your help, it will continue to improve.

We have asked them to make sure you make faster progress in mathematics, to make some lessons more challenging and to give you opportunities to learn in many different ways.

Thank you for helping us with the inspection.

Yours sincerely

Steve Isherwood

Her Majesty's Inspector