

The Roebuck School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	119237
Local Authority	Lancashire
Inspection number	313226
Inspection dates	21–22 May 2008
Reporting inspector	Dave Byrne

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	374
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Catherine Swales
Headteacher	Miss Jackie Burns
Date of previous school inspection	1 April 2005
School address	Inkerman Street Ashton Preston Lancashire PR2 2BN
Telephone number	01772 729337
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This is a large primary school. The percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals is average. An above average percentage has learning difficulties and/or disabilities and the number with statements of special educational needs is well above the national average. The large majority of pupils are of White British origin although a small minority are from other ethnic backgrounds. The percentage requiring support for English as an additional language is below average. The school is emerging from a period of instability caused by uncertainty about the leadership of the school. The headteacher took up post seven months ago. During the inspection, a part-time associate deputy headteacher was in post covering for the long term absence of the substantive deputy headteacher.

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, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires significant improvement, because it is performing 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 pupils' achievement and progress in Key Stage 2.

The overall effectiveness of the school has declined since the last inspection. Standards in Key Stage 2 have fallen, as has the quality of pupils' learning. This is because of unavoidable disruptions within school that have reduced its ability to sustain improvement. As a result, pupils have not been achieving as well as they should in Key Stage 2. The recently appointed headteacher, however, is rejuvenating the school. The morale of staff and pupils has improved, aspects of teaching and learning have been strengthened and the school's self-evaluation is now accurate. Parents are generally supportive of the school and many commented that improvements are occurring in the school.

Children enter the school with skills that are below those typical for their age. They get off to a good start in the Foundation Stage which is successfully built on in Years 1 and 2. By the age of seven, pupils do as well as expected for their age in reading, writing and mathematics. In Years 3 to 6 too many pupils have been underachieving: the 2007 national test results for Year 6 were below average in English, mathematics and science. The root of the problem is the variation in quality of teaching in Key Stage 2 which means the needs of the pupils are not always met, particularly those of the more able. Improvement is underway. Inspection evidence, backed up by assessment data held by the school, shows that progress in Key Stage 2 is accelerating. Good support and direction from the headteacher and local authority (LA), has increased the teachers' knowledge of how well their pupils are learning and how to guide them in their next steps in learning. Effective assessment and tracking systems have been introduced which highlight pupils who need support. Predictions for the national test results of the current Year 6, however, show that despite the improving progress, the legacy of underachievement that has accrued in recent years remains. Standards are lower than they should be, particularly in writing and science. The grass roots of recovery are visible but are too recent to be deemed secure.

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory and improving. It has some strengths, especially in the Foundation Stage, Key Stage 1 and parts of upper Key Stage 2. Where teaching is at its best, pupils are involved in taking decisions; assess their own progress; and make good links between different subjects. Too many lessons, however, lack spark and energy. Activities are sometimes mundane and restrict opportunities for pupils to think and act for themselves or to participate in discussions or debates. A lack of creativity within the curriculum exacerbates the lack of fun in some lessons and tends to reduce pupils' enjoyment of learning, which is only satisfactory in some classes.

Pupils and most parents feel that behaviour has improved since the appointment of the present headteacher. It is good in lessons but less so during lunchtimes. Pupils' views are valued and respected and recent improvements have increased the opportunities for them to take responsibility within school. The school is caring and keeps pupils safe and secure. Academic guidance has been changed for the better. The progress of pupils is now carefully tracked. The

procedures for deploying support staff to raise standards for pupils who are falling behind are not, however, as efficient as they need to be.

There is a steely determination amongst staff and governors to pull together and move the school forward. The headteacher has an excellent view of the school's strengths and where it needs to improve. The headteacher, together with support from the LA, is the driving force for improvement within the school. Senior leaders are increasingly taking responsibility for monitoring the school and its performance, but not all staff across the school are involved enough in school improvement. The revitalised governing body provides satisfactory support for the school and this, together with the energy, vision and skill of the headteacher, contributes to the school's satisfactory capacity to improve.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

The Foundation Stage is well managed and ensures that children receive a good start to their education within a safe and secure environment. A strong curriculum and good teaching enables children to make progress particularly in their communication, language and literacy development. From a low starting point in Nursery, children improve to reach the expectations for their age by the end of Reception. Imaginative use is made of the cramped outdoor space but resources in Reception are limited and hold back some aspects of children's learning outdoors. There is a good balance between adult-led and child-initiated activities. Adults encourage the children to choose sensibly and act independently. Good assessment enables the setting of challenging targets for all children.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise achievement in Key Stage 2
- Make lessons more exciting and challenging for all pupils
- Strengthen the contribution of all staff to the process of school improvement.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 4

Achievement is inadequate. Despite some recent improvements, pupils are capable of achieving much more by the time they leave the school. Pupils make good progress between the Foundation Stage and Year 2 but by the end of Year 6 this good start has not been maintained. Pupils' progress in Key Stage 2 has dropped steadily since 2005 and was significantly below that found in almost all similar schools nationally in 2007. The school is acting to reverse this trend. Assessment data show that the progress of the current Year 6 pupils has picked up recently, but gains in their learning since they were in Year 2 have still been unsatisfactory.

Standards in 2007 were above average at Year 2 particularly in mathematics. At Year 6, standards in English, mathematics and science declined. Standards in writing are low compared to reading which pulled down the overall English results to significantly below average. In science, standards have been below average for the last three years and mathematics results have fallen to below average over the same period. The school predicts that there will be some improvement in national test results for Year 6 this year, and at Year 2 standards will be average. There are differences in the performance of boys and girls. Girls tend to do better in Key Stage 1 and in writing across the school, but boys tend to do better in science at Key Stage 2. In 2007, pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities reached standards just above those of similar pupils

nationally. Pupils with English as an additional language performed better than similar pupils nationally at Key Stage 1 and matched the performance of similar pupils at Key Stage 2. Across the school the more able pupils could be given more challenge to reach higher standards.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

The school correctly judges this to be satisfactory. Behaviour has, according to the pupils and some parents, been a concern in the past. Much has now been resolved and during lessons it is mostly good, although at lunchtimes it is satisfactory. In all classes pupils' personal, spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory. Pupils generally play together safely; they have a clear idea of what is right and wrong. Whilst pupils generally get on well together, their understanding of the richness and diversity of cultures within their school community is weak. The pupils show courtesy and respect for others. In lessons pupils' concentration is dependent on the quality of teaching and at times they do not listen as well as they might. Attendance is broadly average; the large majority of pupils understand the need to come to school regularly and punctually. They know why a healthy lifestyle, including regular exercise and a balanced diet, is important. They are satisfactorily prepared for their next stage of education.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching is satisfactory overall with some strengths in the Foundation Stage, Key Stage 1 and parts of upper Key Stage 2. All staff are determined to raise the quality of education provided and with the very effective leadership provided by the new headteacher, many improvements are underway. Nevertheless, the quality of teaching is still too variable in parts of Key Stage 2 and is not yet good enough to overcome the legacy of underachievement. Lessons are often pitched at pupils of average ability. In the better lessons pupils are expected to think for themselves and play an active part in their learning. Too often, however, pupils are over-directed and their ability to make decisions, participate in debates or plan and take actions for themselves is under-developed. This limits the progress made by many of the pupils, particularly the more able. Assessment is now being used to identify and support pupils requiring additional help. The deployment of teaching assistants in this process is being reviewed: it is not yet as efficient as it might be.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The school's curriculum meets statutory requirements and is enriched by a good range of extra-curricular clubs. The headteacher has increased the school's focus on improving the core skills of literacy and numeracy. Initiatives are underway to improve the planning of writing and aspects of science and mathematics. The learning experiences provided are, however, rather unimaginative. Some good initiatives have been taken, for example, focus weeks on poetry and science but overall the creativity and fun of learning is not developed enough. This reduces the motivation for pupils. The school recognises that better planning is needed to exploit learning links between literacy, numeracy and information and communications technology (ICT) in all subjects. The provision for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, and

those with English as an additional language is satisfactory, but not enough is done to meet the needs of the more able pupils. Personal, social and health programmes are well managed and in the process of being improved.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

The school is effective in providing a caring environment for the pupils. Pupils say the teachers are, 'kind, generous and helpful'. Procedures are in place to secure the health, safety, and protection of children. Pupils say that they feel safe and welcome the improvements made to promote good behaviour. Effective action is taken to ensure that the few incidents of bullying are dealt with and better management of pupils at lunchtime is starting to improve behaviour. The support for pupils' academic development is satisfactory and has improved significantly in recent months. Group target-setting has been established. However, systems to check on individual achievement are not yet embedded in every class and are not linked closely enough to raising achievement. This results in a lack of challenge for some pupils, particularly the more able. Pupils with specific language or learning needs are helped by support staff and outside agencies to make good progress. Pupils make a happy transition to and from the school because of good liaison with outside agencies and parents.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The leadership and management of the school are satisfactory and have improved significantly over recent months. Very effective changes made by the headteacher have settled the school, lifted the morale of the staff and pupils, and focused attention on raising standards. The headteacher has taken swift action to halt the decline in standards at Key Stage 2: the use of academic targets has recently been strengthened to drive forward improvements across the school. A good plan is being implemented which has reorganised and developed the roles of the senior leaders, some of whom are inexperienced. As a result they are becoming increasingly knowledgeable about what is happening in the school and how to improve it. They have a sound understanding of their responsibilities but do not currently have sufficient involvement in the evaluation of school performance. Subject leaders have a general awareness of standards but at present they are not doing enough to reduce the variations in the quality of teaching and learning in Key Stage 2.

Governors are totally committed to improving achievement in Key Stage 2. They are clear on the action required and at present are developing their role of holding the school to account. With the continued good support from the local authority and the very strong leadership of the headteacher, the school has satisfactory capacity to improve. However, the school is not providing value for money because pupils are not achieving well enough.

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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	School Overall
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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
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	3
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3

Achievement and standards

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

Personal development and well-being

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

The quality of provision

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

¹ 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

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	4
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	4
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?	Yes

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

23 May 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of The Roebuck School, Lancashire, PR2 2BN

Thank you very much for the warm welcome and for helping my colleagues and me when we visited your school. It is a friendly place and we really appreciated your help in finding our way around.

Roebuck is a school that is improving in many ways. Most of you enjoy your learning, but at times we felt that lessons could be more exciting. The adults in school work hard to make sure you are happy and safe. Please thank your parents for sending us lots of replies to the questionnaire. They are generally pleased with the school and most agree with you, that the school is getting better.

Children get a good start to school in the Nursery and Reception classes. They learn well and come into Year 1 well prepared. By the end of Year 2, you do as well as expected in reading, writing and mathematics. In Years 3 to 6 some of you haven't done as well as you should in recent years. This is changing. It was great to see how many of you now know what you need to do to make your work better. There is still more to be done though. We feel that by the end of Year 6, you could do better in writing, science and some areas of mathematics. With your hard work and the support of the teachers, we feel you will get to the standards of which you are capable.

Because there is room for improvement at Key Stage 2, we have given the school a Notice to Improve. This means that the school will continue to get support from people in the local authority and there will be a visit from another inspector next year.

A massive strength of your school is your new headteacher. She knows exactly what is needed to give you the best possible education, which is what you all deserve. We hope you all continue to help each other and your teachers so that Roebuck is as good as it can be.

Yours sincerely

Dave Byrne

(Lead inspector)