

Upholland Roby Mill CofE Voluntary Aided Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	119496
Local Authority	Lancashire
Inspection number	313316
Inspection date	25 September 2007
Reporting inspector	Lynne Read

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	44
School	
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Ruth Pollock
Headteacher	Mrs Veronica Riordan
Date of previous school inspection	1 February 2004
School address	School Lane Roby Mill Up Holland Skelmersdale Lancashire WN8 0QR
Telephone number	01695 622536
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

This small school serves families in the immediate rural location and also from a much wider geographical area between Skelmersdale and Shevington. Pupils come from a wide range of backgrounds; the proportion claiming free school meals is below average. When children enter the Reception class, their development is broadly typical for their age but this varies between year groups. There is an average proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities but the proportion of pupils who have statements of special educational need is higher than average. All pupils come from White British backgrounds. In some year groups, a significant percentage of pupils transfer to the school part way through their education.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Roby Mill CE Primary is a good school and provides good value for money. This judgement matches the evaluation made by the management, staff and governors. Parents have very positive views of the school. One wrote, 'the school has helped my children in all aspects of their development', whilst another praised the 'family philosophy' and the 'hard-working, caring staff'. Links with other schools and outside agencies provide valuable benefits for the pupils, especially in terms of facilities for sport and physical education, and in providing expert help to meet individual needs.

At the start of Year 1, pupils' development is broadly typical, although it varies between year groups depending on the proportion of pupils with additional needs or who are more able. Pupils make consistently good progress through both key stages. Standards for Year 6 are consistently above average and were significantly so in the 2006 tests when a very good percentage of pupils attained the higher Level 5. Convincing indicators from the school's records, together with observations, show that pupils are currently making good progress and are meeting the challenging targets that the school sets. Pupils' personal development is good. The school's religious foundation provides a strong caring ethos which ensures that pupils feel secure. As a result, there is a calm, productive atmosphere and pupils enjoy coming to school.

Teaching is good. There is good expertise among teachers and teaching assistants so they are able to provide very good support for pupils with additional needs. Lessons challenge pupils' thinking and problem-solving skills, providing good opportunities for them to be active, enthusiastic learners. In the small teaching groups, learning is often personalised and this helps to boost progress.

The curriculum has breadth and balance and is satisfactory. It provides good opportunities for pupils to practise their literacy and numeracy skills but few opportunities to consolidate what they learn in information and communication technology (ICT) lessons. There is satisfactory enhancement for learning through additional music, art and science activities at the High School and some out-of-school clubs. The Healthy School Award recognises the good work done in teaching about healthy living and generating pupils' enthusiasm for exercise and sport. Pupils have varied opportunities to experience responsibility, share in decision making and they carry out a range of jobs diligently. This prepares them well for their future lives, whilst also contributing to the strong sense of community in school.

Management is good. The headteacher provides good leadership which promotes strong teamwork and is constantly driving the school forward. Attention to safety issues, including checking on the suitability of staff and helpers, is thorough. Managers continually identify areas for improvement and develop the relevant plans for action. Because of this effective system, the school has a record of good improvements since the previous inspection and has good capacity to maintain its strengths and improve further.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning in the Reception group are good. The planning of the curriculum produces an inviting learning environment. Children have very good adult support and are encouraged to explore their world and become independent. They also learn a great deal from working in groups alongside infant pupils, especially in communication and collaborative skills.

Children's attainment at entry to Reception varies widely between individuals and from year to year but, on balance, is typical of that usually seen for this age group. Children make good progress in all areas of learning. By the end of the Reception year, the majority have met expectations fully, with strengths in personal and social development. Many have also developed further than usual in early reading and number work.

What the school should do to improve further

- Provide more opportunities for pupils to practise and develop their skills in information and communication technology when studying other subjects.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Standards are consistently above average by Year 6 and pupils achieve well. In this school, the numbers in each year group are very small. Attainment on entry to Year 1 is mostly typical for the age group but fluctuates depending on the number of pupils who are more able or have learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Attainment at Year 2 similarly varies over time from well above average to just below average in 2006. Nevertheless, detailed and convincing school records show pupils make consistently good progress from their starting points. In the 2007 teacher assessments, all pupils attained at least the expected Level 2, which is higher than usually seen in schools across the country.

In the 2006 tests for Year 6 pupils, standards were significantly above average with a good proportion of pupils attaining the higher Level 5. The school's targets were exceeded by a large margin even though some pupils had joined the school part way through their education and did not have the benefit of the school's good provision throughout their junior years. The 2007 Year 6 cohort was very small. Initial results from the 2007 national tests, together with the school's reliable records, show that achievement remains good and that challenging targets are fully met. The school is currently working on improving spelling in the lower juniors where some issues have been highlighted. Pupils who have additional needs make equally good progress to their peers and have very good self-esteem. Boys outnumber the girls significantly in upper Key Stage 2 but great care is taken to ensure that lessons cater for all interests and dispositions. Consequently boys and girls progress at an equal rate.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Personal development and well-being, including pupils' social, moral, spiritual and cultural development, are good. Pupils are effectively encouraged through the caring 'family' ethos and good links with the church. Staff provide good care and support for pupils' individual needs so all are able to cope with the conventions and challenges of school life. As a result, pupils enjoy their work, their behaviour is good and attendance is above average. Pupils say they feel safe in school and know that any rare incidents of oppressive behaviour are dealt with swiftly. Pupils are well informed about healthy lifestyles; they are able to make informed choices of diet and know the importance of exercise. They have a good awareness of, and respect for, beliefs that are different from their own. Although they understand the diverse nature of society, they have few opportunities however, to meet or communicate with people from ethnic minority backgrounds.

Pupils play an important part in decision making through their elected school council. As a result of their requests, school dinners have been improved and a current project is aimed at improving playground facilities. They are keen to take responsibility for jobs around school. Older ones are well trained for their roles in the playtime 'care team'. These factors, together with good standards, mean that pupils are well placed to secure a positive economic future and to make a good contribution to the school and local communities.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Teaching groups are small and well planned to cater for pupils' differing ages in each of the two classes. The more able have good challenges to stretch them. Well trained teaching assistants provide good, sensitive support for pupils who need extra help, enabling them to do well. Throughout the school and across subjects, teachers constantly assess pupils' progress and independent tasks are often planned on a personalised basis. This provides good challenge and helps to accelerate progress.

Teachers make the purpose of lessons clear so pupils know what is expected of them. Introductions to lessons usually have a fast pace and include a good amount of problem-solving and collaborative work. These factors enthuse and motivate pupils but there is the odd occasion when the whole-class work goes on too long and concentration begins to drift. Parents are encouraged to be active partners in the learning process and support the homework programme well.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum is satisfactory. It includes ample opportunities for pupils to consolidate their English and mathematical skills and includes a modern foreign language. Pupils cover the full programme of study for ICT but planning and timetabling do not provide enough opportunities for pupils to practise and enhance their computer skills when studying other subjects. Staff have gone to good lengths to overcome the lack of a hall and school field. Links with local schools provide facilities for physical education, sports tournaments and coaching. Through strong links with a local enterprise, pupils have the use of an adjacent field for games.

Opportunities for learning outside the classroom help to broaden pupils' horizons. Instrumental and art lessons, participation in the local 'proms' and weekly swimming sessions provide added experiences. Some lunchtime sessions have enabled pupils to experience new activities such as golf or 'kwik' cricket. However, both parents and pupils would like to see more out-of-school clubs.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Care, guidance and support are good. Pupils receive good pastoral support and guidance for their personal development which helps them to grow in their self-esteem and confidence. This aspect of the school's work is highly commended by parents. Staff are diligent and very effective in ensuring the pupils' safety and well-being. Rigorous procedures for safeguarding pupils are in place. School routines are well established and good arrangements at lunchtimes and breaks

ensure that pupils are well supervised. Visits arranged prior to starting school, together with good information for parents, ensure that Reception children settle quickly. Very good transition arrangements are in place and older pupils say they are confident about their move to secondary school.

Pupils receive good feedback on how they can improve during lessons and teachers routinely include praise and useful suggestions in their marking. The targets for mathematics show pupils what they need to do to improve and provide a goal to aim for. General advice, in the form of class targets, is provided in English but is not on an individual basis and therefore not as helpful.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good and support strong teamwork. The headteacher, well supported by the senior teacher, provides good leadership and is prepared to be innovative. For example, creative use of resources has meant that more part-time teachers and assistants now provide a wider range of skills and experience than usually seen in a small school. The new staffing structure also allows for better delegation of responsibilities with subject managers now developing an increasingly effective contribution to evaluating the school's performance. Detailed assessment and tracking records are used to keep a close eye on achievement and standards and to set realistic and challenging targets which are routinely met. All aspects of provision are regularly monitored and action is taken where needed leading to a continuous cycle of improvement. For example, improved computer resources and extra support for spelling have resulted recently from this process.

Governors understand the strengths of the school well and have the pupils' interests at heart. Through their active involvement in school and an efficient committee structure they have a secure overview of standards, achievement and provision. Governance is good and all statutory requirements are met.

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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?	2
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?	2
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ 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

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

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2
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?	2

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?	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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	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

26 September 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Upholland Roby Mill CofE Voluntary Aided Primary School, Lancashire. WN8 0QR

Thank you very much for your warm welcome and for helping me when I came to visit your school. I would like to tell you what I found out.

Roby Mill is a very friendly school. Your behaviour is good and you take really good care of each other. You enjoy your learning, try hard and are making good progress. Your teachers and families can be proud of you. I enjoyed watching you at play and I think the 'care team' do a good job. I agree with your school council that it would be good for you to have more facilities on the playground. Your teachers and governors already have some plans and I know that you have lots of exciting ideas.

Please thank your parents for sending me lots of replies to the questionnaire. The vast majority are very pleased with the school, especially the care that your headteacher and staff take in ensuring you are happy and safe.

I know how much you enjoy your work in information and communication technology and how pleased you are with your new and improved computer resources. You cover all the programme of study for the subject but, at present, you do not have enough opportunities to practise and improve your skills. Your teachers agree and will be looking at ways for you to use computers in other subjects, for example to research for information. You might be able to help by suggesting where and when a computer might be of most help to you.

Thank you once again for the interesting conversations I had throughout the day and for letting me know your views so clearly. Please accept my best wishes for the future.

Yours sincerely

Mrs Lynne Read

Lead inspector