

# Ropery Walk Primary School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	113993
<b>Local Authority</b>	Durham
<b>Inspection number</b>	325921
<b>Inspection dates</b>	25–26 November 2008
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Ann Wallis

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

The registered childcare, managed by the governing body, was inspected under section 49 of the Childcare Act 2006.

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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 (total)	227
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	0
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	0
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mrs Geraldine Bleasdale
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr Simon Marshall
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	1 November 2005
<b>Date of previous funded early education inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
<b>Date of previous childcare inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
<b>School address</b>	Ropery Walk Seaham County Durham SR7 7JZ
<b>Telephone number</b>	0191 581 3959
<b>Fax number</b>	0191 581 1734

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<b>Age group</b>	4–11
<b>Inspection dates</b>	25–26 November 2008
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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

## Description of the school

This is an average sized primary school in a coastal town which has some areas of significant deprivation. A well above average proportion of pupils are entitled to free school meals. Most pupils are from White British families and very few have English as an additional language. The number of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is above average. The school makes provision for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) in its Reception Class and in a mixed Reception and Year 1 class.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 2

Ropery Walk Primary is a good school and standards are rising. The care, guidance and support provided for pupils are outstanding. The school is well liked by both pupils and parents and plays a central role in the community it serves. Most parents are supportive of the school and say that their children enjoy attending and are achieving well. A typical comment was ‘all of my children loved this primary school and enjoyed their time here’.

The school is very well led by the headteacher. His clear vision for further improvement is shared by all staff who work well together as an effective team. Under his leadership the school has focused successfully on creating an environment where pupils are well behaved and really want to learn. At the heart of this are improvements to the curriculum to make it more creative, interesting and relevant for pupils. Excellent partnerships with other schools, external agencies and the community enrich the curriculum, support pupils’ personal development and contribute well to community cohesion.

Achievement is good. From starting school with skills that are much lower than usually seen pupils make good progress and leave school with standards that are close to average. Results of national assessments vary and are affected by the differing ability of the year groups. A high proportion of pupils have learning difficulties and/or disabilities and these pupils make good progress. Teachers’ assessments and test results indicate that standards in Year 2 and Year 6 are below average overall but are improving. In Year 6, the results of national tests in 2007 were close to average in English and mathematics. Provisional results for 2008 show a similar picture with an improvement seen especially in English. The school’s strategies to raise standards in mathematics are beginning to have an impact on progress. As a result of the innovative curriculum and the overall good teaching which pupils receive, standards are now rising and current pupils are achieving well.

Relationships between pupils and teachers are excellent and lessons are conducted in an atmosphere of respect and trust. Teachers use praise and encouragement well so pupils are given the confidence to answer questions and contribute to lessons. Most lessons are conducted at a brisk pace and make use of interesting resources so pupils work hard and achieve well. However, in mathematics the work is not always sufficiently challenging and a few pupils could make better progress.

Pupils are exceptionally well cared for and supported in school and provided with very good academic guidance. Staff know their pupils very well and their health, safety and welfare are at the heart of the school’s work. Staff are skilled at working with a very wide range of specialist external agencies to provide all pupils, particularly those who are vulnerable, with excellent personal support. Pupils’ progress is tracked very carefully and immediate action is taken if any child is thought to be underachieving. All pupils are very clear about how well they are doing and how to improve their work. Pupils’ personal development is good. As a result of the outstanding care and support they receive pupils feel safe in school, gain in confidence and enjoy learning.

## Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

### Grade: 2

Provision in the EYFS is good. Children enter Reception with skills and abilities that are well below those typically found. This is especially true in communication, language and literacy. A

good mix of child-initiated activities and focused teaching, often in small groups, encourages children to make good progress so that by the end of the Reception year standards have improved although they remain below average. Extensive use of the new outdoor area encourages good personal development and well-being. However, the lack of a covered area sometimes limits opportunities to extend learning. The indoor classroom can become noisy when all the children are working indoors together which occasionally makes it difficult for children to concentrate.

All staff contribute well to learning and children's welfare. In the mixed Reception and Year 1 class, teachers plan very effectively for the specific learning needs of Reception children by giving opportunities to work in a group separate from older pupils. Teaching and learning are good. Effective questioning with an emphasis on discussion, careful observation and the promotion of good listening skills all help children to learn and develop well. Children enjoy the wide range of activities provided and role-play areas, such as the estate agent's shop, provide good opportunities for imaginative play. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Due to recent staff changes, there is no designated and experienced early years specialist leading the EYFS. Consequently, there is limited rationale for the current successful practice and the vision for further improvement is not fully developed.

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

- Raise standards in mathematics by providing more challenging work in lessons.
- Improve the leadership and management of the EYFS to ensure there is a clear rationale for the present successful practice and a clear vision for further improvement.

### **Achievement and standards**

#### **Grade: 2**

Achievement is good. From a much lower starting point than usually seen pupils make good progress and leave school with standards that are close to average. Results of national assessments vary year on year with the different ability of the year groups. Over a third of pupils have learning difficulties and/or disabilities and there are few higher attaining pupils. Teacher assessments for Year 2 indicate overall standards are below average. In 2007 the results of national tests for Year 6 pupils were below average overall. Standards were closer to average in English and mathematics and weaker in science. The 2008 unvalidated results show a similar picture overall but clear improvement in English and science. English is showing a more positive response to change and standards are rising faster than in mathematics. The school has rightly recognised the need to raise standards in mathematics. Booster classes, better use of assessment data and increased training and support for staff are all beginning to have a positive impact. Currently, all pupils are making good progress in lessons and achieving well. Work in pupils' books and the school's own monitoring data indicates that most pupils are on track to reach their targets this year and that standards are rising.

Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those with English as an additional language make good progress because work is well matched to their needs and they receive skilled individual and small group support from teachers and teaching assistants.

## Personal development and well-being

### Grade: 2

Pupils feel safe and cared for. They are confident that any bullying or friendship problems are dealt with swiftly. The involvement of the school council who wrote and introduced the Anti-Bullying Policy, together with the successful 'buddy system' has given children a powerful voice. Pupils treat each other with respect and they are polite and well behaved. Pupils enjoy coming to school because, as one pupil said, 'teachers play games with us to make lessons fun'. Attendance is satisfactory but improving because the school is taking positive steps to reduce both lateness and absences. Spiritual, moral and social development is good and pupils have raised large amounts of money for charity. However, their cultural development is less secure because pupils have limited planned opportunities to learn about the different cultures of people in this country. A healthy eating policy has been introduced and pupils have a good understanding of the need to live a healthy lifestyle. Drugs and alcohol education help pupils in Years 5 and 6 make sensible choices and keep themselves safe. Year 6 pupils have set up an innovative enterprise business, growing, cooking and selling produce from their garden which teaches them useful life skills. The development of pupils' basic skills in literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT) is satisfactory and pupils are soundly prepared for the next stage of their education.

## Quality of provision

### Teaching and learning

#### Grade: 2

Good teaching and learning enable all pupils to achieve well. Teachers have excellent relationships with pupils and use varied and exciting resources to engage pupils' interest, which adds to their enjoyment of learning. For example, pupils were really helped to appreciate what life was like in Second World War when they had to grab their gas masks (which they had made themselves) and dive under their desks when a very realistic imaginary air raid siren was sounded. Teachers use praise well so pupils gain confidence, answer questions readily and hence make good progress. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are given timely and constructive individual support by teaching assistants so they achieve well. In less stimulating lessons, teachers talk for too long, the pace of learning slows and pupils are not always challenged to achieve their best.

Pupils are frequently encouraged to evaluate their own work so they are clear about how well they are doing. Teachers mark pupils' work regularly and their very helpful suggestions and the challenging targets they set ensure that pupils are also very clear about how to take the next steps in their learning.

### Curriculum and other activities

#### Grade: 2

The curriculum meets the needs of pupils well. It is well planned around a series of themes which help pupils make links between different subjects and practise their literacy and numeracy skills. Pupils enjoy participating in a good range of activities outside of the school day. The school makes excellent use of trained community volunteers who provide a good range of sports clubs which are appreciated by pupils and parents. Through membership of the British Fencing Association, children have been given opportunities to compete at a high level in

sporting competition. The school has been awarded 'Activemark' in recognition of its good sporting provision. A healthy cookery club provides good opportunities for pupils to devise and prepare recipes using produce they have grown in their enterprise garden. The school has recently made links with partner schools across Europe and is planning to develop these to teach the children more about the lives of children in other countries. French has been introduced to pupils in Key Stage 2 and staff are aware of the need to build upon the language expertise of some teachers in order to consolidate the quality of this provision across the school.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 1**

Outstanding care, guidance and support together with a strong emphasis on welfare and safety, successfully contribute to pupils' enjoyment and good personal development and well-being. Relationships between staff and pupils are excellent and this helps pupils to feel valued and well cared for. The school takes very positive steps to identify vulnerable pupils, including a number of young carers, and works in highly effective partnerships with other agencies to provide them and their parents with much needed support and advice. The 'Place to Be' counselling support is a real strength of the school and provides easy and rapid access for children in distress. Systems to safeguard pupils' health and safety, including risk assessments, are fully in place. Teachers track pupils' academic progress very carefully with frequent opportunities for underachievement to be quickly identified. The results of pupils' assessments are shared with all teachers and they make excellent use of these to plan future learning. Teachers mark pupils' work very carefully and give them very clear and effective guidance on how to improve.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 2**

The headteacher's clear vision for improvement is shared by all staff. Staff feel valued and morale is high. Experienced senior and middle managers in Key Stages 1 and 2 monitor and coordinate the work of their subject areas well. They make very good use of assessment data to track pupils' progress and intervene in their learning if there is any danger of pupils underachieving. Appropriate areas for development have been identified and the school recognises that raising standards in mathematics to match those in English is a priority. Teaching and learning are monitored carefully and leaders and managers have an accurate picture of the school's strengths and weaknesses. New staff are contributing and sharing valuable expertise which is improving the quality of teaching and learning. Governors are very supportive of the school and are proud of its successes, especially of the central role it has in the community. However, they do not yet monitor the work of the school sufficiently closely.

Finances are managed effectively. Money has been very well spent to make appreciable improvements to the indoor and outdoor learning environments for all pupils. The school has successfully addressed issues for improvement identified at the last inspection by improving teaching and learning and the curriculum and is now well placed to improve further.

**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).**



**Annex A**

**Inspection judgements**

<b>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</b>	<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
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?	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

**Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage**

<b>How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?</b>	2
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	2
How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	2
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	2
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	2
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	3

**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/or disabilities make progress	2

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<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.

## Personal development and well-being

<b>How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	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
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	3
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	3

## The quality of provision

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?</b>	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1

## 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 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 eliminated	2
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	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	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

**Annex B**

**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

27 November 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Ropery Walk Primary School, Durham, SR7 7JZ

Thank you so much for the warm and friendly welcome you gave to me and my fellow inspector when we visited your school last week. We are really grateful to those of you who took time to speak with us and tell us about the things you enjoy doing at school. Please also thank your parents for returning our questionnaires and letting us know their views about your school.

These are some of the things we have included in our report about your good school:

your work hard and although standards are below average, your achievement is good

your behaviour is good

lessons are interesting and you are taught well

your school gives you outstanding care, guidance and support and your personal development is good

your school is well led and managed by the headteacher and senior staff.

What we have asked your school to do now:

raise standards in mathematics by making sure you are given work which will enable you to do your very best in lessons

improve the leadership and management of the Reception Classes.

You can help your school to improve even further by attending regularly and working with your teachers to achieve the very best you can. Best wishes for the future.

Yours sincerely

Ann Wallis

Lead inspector