

Robert Ferguson Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	112242
Local Authority	Cumbria
Inspection number	337877
Inspection dates	28–29 April 2010
Reporting inspector	Brian Dower

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 of pupils on the school roll	287
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Christopher Southward
Headteacher	Mr Graham Frost
Date of previous school inspection	14 May 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 14 lessons and observed 12 teachers. They held meetings with groups of pupils, staff and a member of the governing body. There was a telephone conversation with a representative of the local authority and with the Chair of the Governing Body. They observed the school's work, and looked at a range of documentation, including pupils' books and files, monitoring and assessment records, minutes of the meetings of the governing body, school improvement planning, curriculum and lesson plans. One hundred and seventeen completed questionnaires from parents and carers were analysed, together with 28 from staff and 129 from pupils.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following:

- pupils' current progress and the level of their basic skills
- how effectively all groups of pupils are challenged in lessons
- the use of assessments and improvement targets to support pupils in their learning
- safeguarding arrangements to ensure pupils' well-being and the quality of the care, guidance and support they receive
- the effectiveness of leaders and managers at all levels to bring about improvements in pupils' personal and academic development.

Information about the school

The school is larger than the average primary school. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is above average; that of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is average. The majority of pupils are of White British heritage, with a very small minority from minority ethnic groups. Very few join or leave the school part way through their primary education. The school has a number of awards, including the Inclusion Charter Mark and the Healthy Schools status. A newly appointed headteacher took up his post in September 2009.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

3

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

This is a satisfactory school. It is improving rapidly. Attainment by the end of Year 6 is improving and rose significantly from well below average in 2008 to average in 2009. Pupils' progress over time and their achievement are satisfactory for most groups. Current tracking information shows this improving trend is continuing and the current Year 6 are working at slightly above average levels.

Pupils say they feel safe in school. They understand how to keep fit and well. They eat healthily and take full advantage of a wide range of extra-curricular physical activities. Many of the older pupils support the younger ones during break and lunch times. Pupils understand and care about local community issues, evident from their involvement in the environmental agency's rivers project. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Behaviour is good, with very few incidents of bullying or unkind remarks. The school council is active in many ways, for example, in raising money for charity and coming forward with suggestions for improving outside play facilities

There have been significant improvements in the quality of teaching, particularly in raising expectations and fostering positive learning habits. Systems to guide pupils on how to improve are now well established. Inconsistencies remain in pitching work at a challenging level for all groups, teachers' use of questioning, the deployment of time and the way in which independent learning is fostered. The well coordinated curriculum provides for pupils' personal and academic development in a balanced way. Enrichment activities are extensive and varied and do much to broaden pupils' understanding of the world around them. Care and support are targeted at the areas of greatest need and make an outstanding contribution to the overall good progress of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds. There are individual pupils from these groups whose progress is rapid and their achievement is excellent.

Leaders, managers, governors and all who work in the school are ambitious for its success. The newly appointed headteacher is well supported by other leaders. Effective self-evaluation has led to more rigorous monitoring and more structured management systems. These changes are reaping benefits as can be seen in the improving attainment. The school's capacity to secure further improvements is good.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the rate of pupils' progress and accelerate learning across the school, by:
 - ensuring that learning activities are diverse and suitably challenging for all

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

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groups

- developing the range and rigour of teachers' questioning skills
 - creating time in lessons for pupils to reflect on their learning and seek further help if needed.
- About 40% of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**3**

Pupils enjoy their work and participate enthusiastically in lessons. The pace of their learning and progress in many lessons seen was good. Many said how much they like their teachers and the other adults who support them. Consequently, they work well and try to complete their tasks. Overall, progress is satisfactory and attainment at the end of Key Stage 2 is broadly average and rising. There have been significant improvements in the ability of the older pupils to write fluently and accurately and in their mathematical problem solving skills. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and the small number from minority ethnic backgrounds make good progress and achieve well overall because provision is tailored to their needs.

Pupils know right from wrong and they are aware of the consequences of their actions. They have a good understanding of the cultural and religious diversity of British society and this, together with their creative art work and their music, does much for their spiritual and cultural development. Their social skills are evident from their ease in working collaboratively in school and with organisations outside. They have good speaking and listening skills and a natural courtesy and openness. Their basic skills in literacy, numeracy and the use of information and communication technology are satisfactory and the school is rightly looking to ways to develop these further through cross-curricular working. Attendance is average. There has been a significant reduction in lateness over recent months. Pupils are satisfactorily prepared for the next stage in their education.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low.

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Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	3
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	3
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

The quality of the teaching observed ranged from satisfactory to outstanding. Several positive features include teachers' good subject knowledge and the way in which they ensure that pupils know how well they are doing and the steps needed to improve. This is because teachers and teaching assistants closely monitor the progress pupils make in lessons through listening, observing and talking to them. The improvements already noted have been aided by the strong partnerships with outside advisers and highly effective training which is ironing out the inconsistencies which remain. In addition, there have been significant developments in the use of new technologies for teaching and learning since the previous inspection. At times, learning activities are insufficiently challenging for all groups. Teachers' questioning does not always challenge pupils about the 'how' and 'why' of their answers and to explain their thinking beyond brief responses. On some occasions, there is insufficient time for pupils to think about what they have learnt and to decide for themselves what they need to do to improve.

Many aspects of pupils' personal development are good because of the quality of the care, guidance and support they receive. Pupils have every confidence in school staff who are considerate of their views. There is mutual respect and the school is a harmonious community. The curriculum is tailored to meet pupils' needs, particularly in promoting their health and well-being. The emphasis on widening pupils' horizons is evident in the well supported range of extra-curricular activities. Excellent adaptations have been made to the curriculum to meet the personal and academic needs of vulnerable pupils and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

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These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	3
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

Leaders and governors have an accurate view of where the school is and what is needed to take it forward. Recently introduced changes have improved the rigour in monitoring and evaluation. The school now has clarity in roles and responsibilities and straightforward lines of accountability. Forward planning is good and all staff are working to the same priorities to improve learning and progress. The drive to improve is strong and outcomes are improving. Equality of opportunity is good. Improved tracking ensures that barriers to learning are identified quickly and dealt with effectively, resulting in all pupils having an equal chance.

Good use is made of partnerships with outside agencies and other schools to support pupils in their personal development and learning. The use of such links to support vulnerable pupils is exceptionally effective. Close links with parents and carers ensure they are well informed about their children's progress and any problems are resolved speedily. The school successfully promotes community cohesion. Careful planning has created a harmonious community where diversity is valued. Its influence stretches into the local community through pupils' music and sport, their involvement in environmental projects and through the open evenings for parents and carers. Governors are supportive and closely involved in the day-to-day life of the school. They ask the right questions to ensure that pupils are getting the best possible deal. Safeguarding is effective and evident in daily routines. Staff are checked for suitability to work with this age group and child protection procedures are in place. Safety audits are undertaken regularly and any concerns quickly resolved.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	2
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms	
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3

Early Years Foundation Stage

Many children start in the Nursery with below age-related levels, particularly in their language skills. They feel safe, secure, and happy and make satisfactory progress. By the end of the Reception Year they have narrowed the gap in their skills and are close to average when they start in Year 1. Children behave well, work cooperatively and enjoy taking responsibility. The spacious, well equipped learning environment allows them to make increasing choices about the activities they engage in. There are times when adults control learning and play activities too tightly, limiting children's enquiry-based learning in all areas of the curriculum. Occasionally, too much time is spent by the children passively sitting and listening. This limits opportunities for them to explore, question and take risks in their learning. Children are well cared for and helped to adopt good personal hygiene routines. Appropriate improvement priorities are in place to speed children's development and they have resulted, for example, in them becoming more confident and fluent in their use of language. Leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage are satisfactory. Close links with parents and carers enable them to support their children's learning.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	3

Views of parents and carers

Parents and carers are supportive of the school. Very few concerns were raised in the questionnaire returns. Those that were raised related to individual problems and did not reveal any pattern of dissatisfaction.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Robert Ferguson Primary School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 117 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 287 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	50	43	63	54	2	2	2	2
The school keeps my child safe	52	44	59	50	2	2	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	48	41	67	57	1	1	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	43	37	70	60	2	2	1	1
The teaching is good at this school	45	38	71	61	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	36	31	74	63	6	5	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	27	23	80	68	6	5	1	1
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	24	21	73	62	5	4	1	1
The school meets my child's particular needs	30	26	80	68	1	1	1	1
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	33	28	65	56	13	11	4	3
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	26	22	79	68	6	5	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	34	29	74	63	2	2	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	55	47	57	49	5	4	0	0

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	51	45	0	4
Primary schools	6	41	42	10
Secondary schools	8	34	44	14
Sixth forms	10	37	50	3
Special schools	32	38	25	5
Pupil referral units	12	43	31	14
All schools	9	40	40	10

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above is for the period 1 September to 31 December 2009 and is the most recently published data available (see www.ofsted.gov.uk). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn term 2009 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement. ■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils. ■ The quality of teaching. ■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships. ■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



30 April 2010

Dear Pupils

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

Thank you for the warm welcome we received during our recent inspection of your school. We enjoyed seeing all the interesting things you are doing and talking with you about your work. You made a valuable contribution to the inspection.

We judge that yours is a satisfactory school. Standards are rising. We saw many examples of interesting and creative work and we were impressed by how well you get on with each other and your good behaviour. You have the personal qualities to be successful at school and in later life. You are concerned about those less fortunate than yourselves and do a lot to raise money for charity. You are also closely involved in many activities in your local community.

Thank you to those who returned the questionnaires. They showed how much you enjoy school and that you feel well cared for. You told us how much you like your teachers and the teaching assistants and that they are always there to give you the help and support you need. We agree that they do all they can for you.

There are always things to do to make your school better. We have asked that you are always given challenging work to do and have more time to think about how well you are doing and what you have to do to improve. We have also asked your headteacher and the other adults to make that teachers' questions encourage you to talk about your work at length and that computers are used more to help you to learn for yourselves.

You can help by continuing to work hard and support each other.

Thank you again for the help you gave the inspectors. I offer you my best wishes for the future.

Yours sincerely,

Mr Brian Dower

Lead Inspector

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