

Robartes Junior School

Inspection report

Unique reference number	111922
Local authority	Cornwall
Inspection number	378391
Inspection dates	3–4 May 2012
Lead inspector	John Carnaghan

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

Type of school	Junior
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	7–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	193
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Steven Rogerson
Headteacher	Ewan Murray
Date of previous school inspection	16 October 2008
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Age group	7–11
Inspection date(s)	3–4 May 2012
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Introduction

Inspection team

John Carnaghan

Additional inspector

Fran Ashworth

Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. Inspectors observed 20 lessons and nine hours of teaching by eight teachers. They held meetings with pupils, staff and members of the governing body. Inspectors took account of the responses to the on-line Parent View survey in planning the inspection, observed the school's work, and looked at its documents, assessments, policies and records as well as questionnaires from staff, pupils and 49 parents and carers.

Information about the school

Robartes Junior School is smaller than schools of this type and is growing in size. Almost all pupils are White British and speak English as their first language. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is above average. The school has an above average proportion of pupils supported by school action plus and who have a statement special educational needs. The school has an attached resource base that caters for nine pupils who have speech and communication difficulties. In 2011, the school fell below the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.

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	3
Achievement of pupils	3
Quality of teaching	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils	3
Leadership and management	3

Key findings

- This is a satisfactory school. It is not good because pupils' attainment is below average and achievement, while quickly improving, is satisfactory. Schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.
- After attainment fell in 2011, progress has improved and attainment is now rising. Differences in attainment in English and mathematics have been reduced. Pupils are well supported in their learning, so all groups progress at a similar satisfactory rate.
- Teaching is satisfactory. It has a number of good features, such as positive classroom relationships and effective interventions to support pupils facing barriers to learning. Some teachers do not manage behaviour firmly enough. In some lessons, teachers can be too dominant, limiting pupils' opportunities to work independently. Marking of pupils' work does not always offer enough constructive advice.
- Behaviour is satisfactory. Pupils are usually courteous and keen to learn, but they rely on teachers' alertness and sympathy to establish positive behaviour patterns. This is a safe, caring environment and bullying of all kinds is rare. Through the school's relentless efforts, attendance is improving and is broadly average.
- Leadership and management are satisfactory. Staff work closely as a team and teachers' performance is well managed. Assessment information is used effectively to track progress, develop teachers' classroom skills and initiate reforms. This has helped to improve teaching and, consequently, to raise attainment. The curriculum's numerous enrichment activities provide many opportunities for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and, particularly, cultural development.
- The attached unit is well led and managed and provides a calm, caring environment where pupils make progress towards overcoming barriers to learning and begin the process of integration into the main school.

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

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What does the school need to do to improve further?

- By January 2013, raise pupils' achievement by:
 - ensuring that behaviour management in all lessons is effective so all pupils have the best possible opportunity to learn
 - developing the marking of pupils' work so that they all clearly understand what they should do to improve
 - building on the considerable efforts made to continue improvements in attendance.
- By September 2012, develop pupils' independence by offering more opportunities in lessons for them to work alone, in pairs and in groups.

Main report

Achievement of pupils

Pupils enter school with attainment that is well below average. By the end of Year 6, attainment is below average but is rising; pupils make satisfactory progress at school. The strong emphasis on improving teaching has had a positive impact on learning; progress has risen sharply this year.

The school's inclusive nature ensures it meets the learning needs of all groups of pupils and, given their starting points, the achievement of all groups of pupils is satisfactory. Pupils in the resource base are encouraged to take part in formal literacy and numeracy sessions and they make satisfactory progress. Initiatives such as special classes and targeted interventions support many pupils facing barriers to progress as well as a number who have the potential for disaffection. In consequence, progress is satisfactory for all pupil groups, including disabled pupils and those with special educational needs. A recent emphasis on mathematics teaching has closed the gap with English so attainment is now similar in both subjects. Pupils benefit from many opportunities to read during the week. Their reading has benefitted from regular phonics teaching to all ages so that by Year 6, while reading attainment is a little below average, it is improving.

Parents and carers report their children make good progress; inspection evidence indicates that progress is satisfactory because teaching is not yet consistently good. Where teaching is rigorous and well organised, pupils progress more quickly. In a Years 5 and 6 mathematics lesson, pupils enjoyed a variety of brief activities to develop their skills in ordering numbers. They remained on task throughout the activities and made good progress in developing number skills due to exceptionally thorough lesson planning and preparation and effective pupil management. Some teaching does not manage pupils with such assurance. For example, in another mathematics lesson, pupils' low-level disturbance and calling out meant the session ran too slowly and was over-dominated by the teacher; this reduced opportunities for pupils to work independently and to consolidate their learning and they consequently made slower progress.

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Quality of teaching

Parents and carers believe their children are well taught, and pupils agree. Inspection indicates teaching is satisfactory but improving, resulting in progress similar to that made by pupils nationally. Teachers plan well to make lessons engaging; they adapt the curriculum to provide interesting experiences, for example using the week's theme of Portugal in a literacy lesson to encourage pupils to write instructions. The teaching of reading is well planned to cater for the full range of needs and engages pupils' interest.

Teachers' positive encouragement and high expectations help pupils work hard. Pupils rely on teachers' good organisation, focus on learning and effective classroom management to help them achieve. In consequence, in many lessons the emphasis is on the teacher leading learning and taking pupils through their work step-by-step. This ensures all groups make progress and helps the teacher address difficulties that arise. However, it also means there are too few opportunities for pupils to develop independent learning skills.

At times, pupils find it hard to keep to classroom conventions, such as raising their hands. Where behaviour management is less effective, the calm atmosphere of lessons deteriorates and learning slows. Teachers and teaching assistants plan well to meet the varied needs in each class. Where assessment information indicates pupils are in danger of falling behind, the school quickly introduces extra help, selecting from a menu of interventions and support strategies to best match pupils' requirements. Many teaching assistants are skilled practitioners, fostering positive relationships and helping pupils, such as those who are disabled and those who have special educational needs, overcome difficulties. The teacher and two teaching assistants worked as a team to motivate low attaining Years 5 and 6 pupils to develop number skills, constantly praising, cajoling and encouraging their charges so that many quickly grasped effective problem-solving strategies.

The team of staff in the resource base work well together; teaching of small groups is often good, with an emphasis on practical and visual elements that is very engaging.

Most pupils' work is marked but teachers, while making encouraging comments, do not provide consistently clear advice to help pupils improve their work. Pupils have targets and these are well known by those in Year 6. However, the use of targets to assist younger pupils is inconsistent.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Pupils respond well to teachers and other adults and most want to learn. They are polite, routinely opening doors for adults. Typically, classroom behaviour is positive and relationships are good, as confirmed by school records. However, a number of pupils have poor social skills and rely on their teachers' firmness, good nature and sense of humour to help them. Most teachers manage behaviour capably but,

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occasionally, classrooms become noisy.

Parents, carers and pupils view behaviour favourably. They have few concerns about bullying; the inspection finds that bullying of all kinds, including cyber-bullying and that related to special educational needs, is unusual. The school deals with bullying rigorously; its behaviour management strategies are effective, widely accepted and usually applied by staff. Pupils report they feel safe at Robartes, saying their caring teachers are one of the school's strongest features. Many appreciate that the school provides a haven of calm and order in their lives. Parents and carers are also confident that the school provides a safe environment. Staff in the resource base manage behaviour skilfully; although many pupils find concentration very hard, behaviour is not allowed to disrupt learning.

The school makes considerable efforts to encourage parents to send their children to school, including a member of staff who focuses on attendance issues. Despite some continuing parental reluctance, this work is paying off. Attendance has risen sharply this year and is now broadly similar to the national average.

Leadership and management

The headteacher is involved with every element of school life and knows pupils, parents and carers very well. After attainment fell in 2011, he worked closely with key leaders and, using assessment information perceptively, identified what actions were required. The school has improved the quality of teaching through more focused lesson monitoring and improved professional development opportunities and by introducing more rigorous intervention work with individual pupils and small groups. As a result, progress and attainment are now rising. Staff share leaders and managers' ambition and drive for improvement.

The school welcomes incoming pupils, whatever the problems they face. This does not always benefit overall attainment but is powerful confirmation of Robartes' inclusive ethos. The school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination very well; numerous pupils spoke of issues faced in previous schools that staff have understood and addressed. The leadership of the resource base is effective; the new leader works well with established staff and has relevant plans for the future.

Governors monitor and support the school well. They ensure pupils are safe, for example by regular checking on the learning environment, and all safeguarding requirements are met. Teaching is carefully monitored, both by senior leaders and teachers' peers. These two different approaches and the use of performance management have begun to eliminate weaknesses. Leaders, staff and members of the governing body plan well together for the future. Improvements in teaching, attendance and progress demonstrate the school has capacity for sustained improvement. Continuing improvement is further assured by its shared leadership and the management systems in place.

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The curriculum is good because it addresses the wide range of pupils' needs as well as incorporating an impressive variety of enrichment activities. Almost all pupils attend one of the many interesting after-school clubs that provide musical, artistic and sporting opportunities. Enrichment afternoon every Friday involves all pupils in varied activities, from samba dancing to using the cameras on computers. Many pupils say it is the highlight of their week. These activities effectively promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Portuguese week opened many pupils' eyes to a different culture and environment, addressing concerns raised in the previous inspection. The school chickens and market garden actively involve pupils, helping them understand the moral issues implicit in food production and benefitting their diet.

The school is proactive in seeking to engage with parents and carers. It takes creative initiatives, such as inviting families to come in before school to have breakfast together. It runs extra help, for example inviting pupils, parents and carers to participate in certain lessons together. A parent support advisor works closely with families and provides a valuable resource for the local community. Nevertheless, a small group of parents and carers do not engage with their children's education.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all 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	54	42	2	2
Primary schools	14	49	32	6
Secondary schools	20	39	34	7
Special schools	33	45	20	3
Pupil referral units	9	55	28	8
All schools	16	47	31	6

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September to 31 December 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Attendance	the regular attendance of pupils at school and in lessons, taking into account the school's efforts to encourage good attendance.
Behaviour	how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Floor standards	the national minimum expectation of attainment and progression measures.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the governors and 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:	inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school.
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.
Safety	how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.

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.



7 May 2012

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Robartes Junior School, Bodmin PL31 1LU

Thank you for being so helpful when the inspectors visited your school recently. We enjoyed talking to you very much and are pleased that you appreciate your school and how well it looks after you.

Robartes provides a satisfactory education. You make satisfactory progress and, although attainment is rising, it is still below average at the end of Year 6. Many lessons are good and teachers try hard to make them interesting, so we were pleased to hear that you enjoy learning. Some lessons are less effective because you do not get enough chances to work on your own and, sometimes you forget your good behaviour habits and things get a bit noisy. Behaviour is satisfactory; much is good but there can be moments in lessons where some pupils become too talkative. Bullying is very unusual and well dealt with if it happens. The headteacher and his team have worked hard to improve achievement and this is starting to happen.

I have asked the school to focus on making these improvements:

- Raise achievement by making sure behaviour in lessons is well managed, that that the marking of your books gives you clear advice and attendance continues to rise.
- Ensure lessons give you more opportunities to work independently.

You can help by making sure you come to school on every day that you can and by behaving sensibly at all times.

Once again, many thanks for your contributions to this inspection; it was a pleasure meeting you.

Yours sincerely

John Carnaghan
Lead inspector

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