

# Lowca Community School

## Inspection report

---

<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	112158
<b>Local authority</b>	Cumbria
<b>Inspection number</b>	378436
<b>Inspection dates</b>	23–24 February 2012
<b>Lead inspector</b>	Gillian Salter-Smith

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

---

<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 of pupils on the school roll</b>	35
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Carl Ormerod
<b>Headteacher</b>	David Fasham
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	2 October 2008
<b>School address</b>	Lowca Whitehaven CA28 6QS
<b>Telephone number</b>	01946 852656
<b>Fax number</b>	01946 852656
<b>Email address</b>	head@lowca.cumbria.sch.uk

---



You can use Parent View to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school. Ofsted will use the information parents and carers provide when deciding which schools to inspect and when.

You can also use Parent View to find out what other parents and carers think about schools in England. You can visit [www.parentview.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.parentview.ofsted.gov.uk), or look for the link on the main Ofsted website: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, work-based learning and skills training, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)

You may copy all or parts of this document for non-commercial purposes, as long as you give details of the source and date of publication and do not alter the information in any way.

To receive regular email alerts about new publications, including survey reports and school inspection reports, please visit our website and go to 'Subscribe'.

Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 4234  
Textphone: 0161 618 8524  
[enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)  
[www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)



© Crown copyright 2012

---

## Introduction

Inspection team

Gillian Salter-Smith

Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. Ten part-lessons were observed for around five hours. These were led by three teachers and two teaching assistants from the school and one visiting teacher. Meetings were held with a group of pupils, the Chair of the Governing Body and staff, and the inspector spoke to a number of parents and carers. The inspector observed the school's work, listened to pupils read from Years 1, 2 and 6 and analysed pupils' work in their books. Documents looked at included the school self-evaluation document, the school improvement plan, reports from the local authority, records of pupils' progress and documents relating to safeguarding. The inspector took account of the responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) in planning the inspection. The inspector analysed the questionnaires from parents and carers of 26 pupils in addition to those completed by pupils and staff.

## Information about the school

The school is much smaller than an average-sized primary school. The vast majority of pupils are of White British heritage. A very small number speak English as an additional language. The ratio of boys to girls is higher than that found in most primary schools. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is broadly average. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs is above average. There are no disabled pupils or pupils with a statement of special educational needs. The proportion of pupils joining or leaving the school mid-key stage is higher than average. The school meets the current floor standard, which sets the minimum expectations for attainment and progress. Staffing is stable but, due to a fall in the number of pupils on roll since the previous inspection, is reduced in number.

**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

<b>Overall Effectiveness</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Achievement of pupils</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Quality of teaching</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Behaviour and safety of pupils</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Leadership and management</b>	<b>2</b>

## Key Findings

- This is a good school. It provides a caring, supportive environment in which pupils feel safe, secure and ready to learn. The headteacher, well supported by a strong team of staff and the governing body, has focused successfully on improvement since the previous inspection so that teaching, the curriculum, pupils' progress and achievement are now good. The school is not outstanding because not enough teaching is outstanding and, although improving, progress in writing in Reception and Key Stage 1 and mathematics in Key Stage 2 are not as strong as in other subjects.
- Pupils make good progress in all key stages and reach broadly average attainment by the end of Year 6. Achievement in reading is a strength. Pupils joining the school mid-key stage settle in quickly and make particularly good progress.
- Teaching is securely good with some that is outstanding. Staff are very good role models and pupils respond very positively to the high expectations of the school. Well-focused support for pupils in danger of falling behind and those with special educational needs helps to accelerate their progress. Outdoor learning in the school's garden and eco-house is exceptionally effective for children in the Reception class.
- Pupils enjoy school a great deal and attendance is consistently above average. Behaviour is typically outstanding in lessons and around the school. Pupils are very clear that there is no bullying and that everyone gets on very well indeed. Pupils in Key Stage 2 work exceptionally well in groups on independent creative projects but they do not have enough opportunity to work similarly in English and mathematics.
- Improvement plans are based on secure monitoring of pupil and staff performance, identify the right priorities and underpin the drive for improvement. Good opportunities for staff professional development through sharing good practice within the school and through very effective partnerships with local schools are improving teaching, assessment, the curriculum and achievement.

## What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Further accelerate progress in writing in Reception and Key Stage 1 by:
  - increasing the proportion of the teaching of writing that is outstanding
  - providing even more interesting and exciting stories to excite the imagination of pupils and children
  - further developing the opportunities for learning in the outdoor area next to the classroom so that they match the intentions for learning planned for indoor activities.
  
- Further accelerate progress and raise attainment in mathematics to above average in Key Stage 2 by:
  - increasing the proportion of the teaching of mathematics that is outstanding
  - providing pupils with more opportunities to work independently
  - providing more opportunities for practical activities relevant to pupils' interests
  - providing greater challenge for the more-able pupils in every part of each lesson in mathematics
  - providing more opportunities to practise and improve mathematical skills in subjects across the curriculum.

## Main Report

### Achievement of pupils

Pupils have very positive attitudes to learning and they settle quickly to tasks, persevere with challenging tasks and cooperate well. In a Key Stage 2 English lesson, pupils worked together independently and excitedly to develop a wide range of vocabulary and phrases in response to the stimulating pictures and sounds about sand and sandstorms. Reception and Key Stage 1 pupils play and learn very well independently, for example when using balancing scales and different objects to explore the concepts of weight and balance.

Children make good progress from starting points in Reception that are often below those expected for their age. Attainment is rising in both Key Stages 1 and 2 and by the end of Year 6, attainment is broadly average with above-average attainment in reading. Attainment by the end of Year 2 is also rising and is above average in reading and mathematics.

Reception-age children make good progress in the mixed-age class and enjoy the stimulating range of play and learning activities both indoors and outdoors. They play and learn happily alongside others and particularly enjoy the excitement of the outdoor garden and the eco-house activities. Learning in the outdoor area immediately next to the classroom is not as rapid because learning activities are not as well planned as those for indoors.

Achievement in reading is particularly strong across the school because pupils are encouraged to enjoy reading. There are frequent opportunities to read with adults, support is provided swiftly at the first signs of any falling behind, and pupils' reading skills are developed systematically from Reception age. Progress in writing has improved because the curriculum provides many opportunities for pupils to write about activities that excite them;

the gap between boys' attainment in writing and the national average is closing. Following a visit to the railway museum in York, pupils became very interested in machines and Key Stage 2 pupils wrote at length to describe how imaginary machines work. Progress in writing, although improving, is not as strong in Key Stage 1; written work shows that progress is accelerating as pupils enjoy the interest and excitement of more powerful stories introduced recently such as Jules Verne's *20,000 Leagues Under the Sea*. A good focus on improving handwriting across the school means that pupils take care to present their work well. Progress in mathematics is good overall, though not as rapid at times in Key Stage 2 when there are fewer opportunities to use practical tasks relevant to pupils' interests to develop their understanding.

Pupils with special educational needs are identified early and well focused support both in class and through one-to-one support, particularly for reading, helps pupils to make good progress. Children and pupils joining the school mid-year, including those learning English as an additional language, are very well supported and additional well targeted activities help them to catch up. Pupils known to be eligible for free school meals make good progress and achieve better than this group nationally in English and mathematics. Parents and carers are justified in their view that progress is good.

### **Quality of teaching**

Teaching is consistently good with some that is outstanding. The school is keen to improve teaching further so that more is outstanding. Outstanding learning and teaching is evident when Reception-age pupils join other pupils from different schools to explore the many exciting opportunities in the eco-house and the school garden.

Relationships between staff and pupils are very good so that pupils are happy and secure and ready to tackle and enjoy learning with great enthusiasm. Good assessment means that staff know the pupils' needs and interests well. In consultation with pupils and children, staff plan the curriculum so that activities are challenging and engaging in most lessons. In a Reception and Key Stage 1 literacy lesson, pupils quickly understood the story about a daddy who worked on a ship that travelled the world. Children and pupils wrote postcards with enthusiasm, tackling challenging writing tasks with growing confidence. They responded positively to the support from staff who drew on the well-planned programme of recognition of letters and sounds to aid children and pupils in their reading and writing. Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage have a good balance between activities led by adults and those they choose for themselves. Pupils in Key Stage 2 benefit from some practical activities designed to improve understanding in mathematics, though these are not yet extensive enough. Occasionally, in Key Stage 2, the more-able pupils are not fully challenged in every part of each mathematics lesson and opportunities to develop mathematical skills in activities across the curriculum are not fully developed.

Teachers' assessment is secure and is used rigorously to identify and support potential underachievement. Pupils know what they need to do to improve because marking of pupils' work is regular and helpful. Pupils in Key Stage 2 find their clear personal targets for improvement in reading, writing and mathematics very helpful. Through a varied and interesting curriculum teaching promotes pupils' interest and excitement in learning, their awareness of right and wrong, their social capabilities and their awareness of cultures different to their own. Parents and carers hold an accurate view of teaching as good and improving.

---

## Behaviour and safety of pupils

Pupils' behaviour in lessons and around the school is typically outstanding. The school is a happy and warm environment. It is second nature for older pupils to look out for and care for younger pupils. Pupils love to learn and apply themselves exceptionally well to tasks, especially when given the opportunity to work independently. In a Key Stage 2 lesson pupils worked exceptionally well in groups on creative projects relating to the stimulus of Mardi Gras. Many parents and carers commented on how much their children love school. The parents and carers of some pupils who joined the school mid-year, recognised that their children's attitudes towards school and learning had been transformed for the better and to a significant extent. Case studies demonstrate how pupils with behavioural difficulties have made exceptionally good progress in settling down and managing their own behaviour.

Pupils report, and school records show, that typically there are no incidents of bullying or racism. Pupils understand that there are different types of bullying, including name-calling and cyber-bullying, and they know what to do should incidents arise. A well-planned programme of personal development helps pupils to have a very clear understanding of how to keep themselves safe in many different situations. They use the extensive garden and grounds sensibly and safely. Parents and carers responding to the questionnaire are unanimous in their view that behaviour is at least good and that their children are kept safe.

## Leadership and management

The headteacher and staff work exceptionally well as a team with a common purpose to provide a secure environment in which every child succeeds and grows in confidence. Monitoring of pupils' performance is robust and helps to identify the right priorities for improvement. Performance management of staff is closely linked to school priorities and supports well-focused professional development. The school works very effectively in partnership with other schools to provide effective professional development. Regular monitoring of teaching is supportive and promotes improvement. However, outcomes of the process are not always systematically recorded. Since the previous inspection, the school has successfully tackled areas for improvement and achievement, teaching, the curriculum and leadership and management have all improved, demonstrating good capacity to improve further.

The governing body is very supportive and has worked well on the long term strategic development of a school facing a falling roll. Imaginative and practical long-term solutions are being put into place to secure the important role the school plays in the local community. Members of the governing body increasingly challenge leaders but are aware that they rely too much on the headteacher's report rather than their own direct knowledge of the school's performance to monitor and evaluate the school's effectiveness. The governing body fulfils its statutory duties to ensure the health, safety and well-being of staff and pupils. Procedures for checking the suitability of staff are rigorous and child-protection procedures are robust. The close attention paid to the progress and well-being of every child and the effectiveness of the support for individual pupils and their families reflect the school's strong commitment to equality of opportunity. Pupils develop a healthy respect for differences between people and discrimination of any sort is not tolerated.

A well-planned curriculum ensures that pupils' needs are met overall and that pupils achieve well. The curriculum arrangements provide particularly well for those pupils joining the school mid-key stage, those in danger of falling behind and those with special educational

needs. The curriculum and the overall ethos of the school promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well. Pupils are encouraged to be sensitive to the needs of others and respect people from different backgrounds, cultures and religions. Good links with schools in Cameroon have opened pupils' eyes to the similarities and differences in cultures. The school is aware of the need to develop meaningful links with schools from very different circumstances to their own within the United Kingdom.



## 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	46	46	8	0
Primary schools	8	47	40	5
Secondary schools	14	38	40	8
Special schools	28	48	20	4
Pupil referral units	15	50	29	5
All schools	11	46	38	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 2010 to 31 August 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](http://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.
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.
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.**



27 February 2012

Dear Pupils

### **Inspection of Lowca Community School, Whitehaven, CA28 6QS**

Thank you for making me so welcome when I came to inspect your school. I enjoyed talking to many of you over lunch, out at play and in lessons. You are right to be very proud of your school; it is a good school. You are a real credit to the school. You behave exceptionally well and are really keen to learn. You are well taught and your teachers make sure that you have a say in what topics you learn about. You do especially well in learning to read and it was heartening to hear how many of you enjoy stories, books and reading for pleasure. You all enjoy the garden and the eco-house and children in Reception benefit a great deal from the excellent learning alongside children from other schools when they get together in the eco-house. Your headteacher, the governing body and staff work well together to help improve your school. They are working hard to make sure that the school stays as an important part of the village. Your parents and carers are right to appreciate your school very much. I am not surprised, especially when the school has made a real effort to ensure that you not only achieve well in your academic work but are very well cared for. The excellent school lunches and the availability of freshly baked products through the school kitchen reflect the school's commitment to you and your family's well-being. I have asked your headteacher, the staff and the governing body to do a few more things to help you improve even more in writing in Key Stage 1 and in mathematics at Key Stage 2. These include:

- making lessons even better so that more of them are outstanding
- giving you more chances to do practical work in mathematics in Key Stage 2
- doing more mathematics when you tackle topics that cover different subjects
- using more exciting stories and topics with younger pupils and children to encourage them in their writing
- making sure that those of you that find tasks easier are really challenged in every part of a lesson, especially in mathematics.

You can help by continuing your good attendance and hard work in lessons.

Yours sincerely

Gillian Salter-Smith  
Lead inspector

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaining about inspections', which is available from Ofsted's website: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk). If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone **0300 123 4234**, or email [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk).