

Bowness-on-Solway Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	112414
Local authority	Cumbria
Inspection number	378487
Inspection dates	7–8 March 2012
Lead inspector	Ann Ashdown

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Foundation
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	70
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Nicola Norman
Headteacher	Chris Rafferty
Date of previous school inspection	2 November 2006
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Introduction

Inspection team

Ann Ashdown

Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. The inspector observed five teachers teaching eight lessons. In addition, she visited specialist sessions teaching the links between letters and sounds and listened to pupils read. Meetings and discussions were held with a group of pupils, members of the governing body, parents, carers, and school staff. The inspector took account of the responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) in planning the inspection, observed the school's work, and looked at pupils' books, progress data, safeguarding information, and other documentation. She analysed 35 questionnaires from parents and carers and also others from pupils and staff.

Information about the school

This school is smaller than the average-sized primary school. An average proportion of pupils are known to be eligible for free school meals. Very few pupils are from minority ethnic backgrounds and none speaks English as an additional language. The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is average. The school meets the current floor standard. It has gained Healthy Schools status and holds Activemark and Eco School awards. Pupils are taught in one Reception and three mixed-age classes. In the last two years, two teachers have left and three new teachers have joined the school.

The privately run provision for childcare, 'Bowness-on-Solway Under 5's Group', shares the school's site. It is subject to a separate inspection and will receive its own inspection report, which will be published on the Ofsted website.

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	2
Achievement of pupils	2
Quality of teaching	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils	2
Leadership and management	2

Key Findings

- This is a good school. The breadth of its curriculum promotes pupils’ good social, moral, spiritual, and cultural development and is characterised by high-quality dramatic productions, very creative artwork, and exciting trips and visits. The school is not outstanding because pupils’ progress in mathematics is slower than in other areas of their learning and teaching and assessment are good overall, rather than outstanding.
- Attainment across the school varies widely according to the ability of each, often very small, year group of children. From individual starting points, often below those expected for their age, children settle into the Reception class quickly, make good progress and become effective learners. Good progress and achievement continue as they move through the school to reach broadly average standards at the end of Year 6.
- Teaching is good. It has improved because new teachers have brought valuable expertise to teaching in the Early Years Foundation Stage and in Years 5 and 6. In most lessons, knowledgeable teachers match work to pupils’ needs skilfully. In a few lessons, progress is slower because pupils have insufficient opportunities to assess their own and each other’s work and are not always sure how to take the next steps in their learning.
- Behaviour is typically good. The vast majority of pupils say they feel safe in school and most parents and carers agree the school is a safe place to be. Any incidents of challenging behaviour are managed well by staff. Most pupils enjoy learning and their attendance is above average.
- The headteacher, staff and members of the governing body know their school well. As a result of accurate self-evaluation and effective management of performance, they have led improvements in teaching well and identified appropriate priorities for further development, such as accelerating pupils’ progress in mathematics.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Accelerate pupils' progress, particularly in mathematics, by:
 - sharing good practice in the teaching of mathematics in order to develop pupils' skills in mental calculation
 - giving pupils more opportunities to practise their mathematical skills in all subjects.

- Improve the quality of teaching and assessment so they are consistently good or better across the school by:
 - setting short-term targets for individual pupils so they are clear about how to take the next steps in their learning
 - giving pupils more opportunities to assess their own and each other's work.

Main Report

Achievement of pupils

In lessons, most pupils work hard, concentrate on the task in hand and are keen to succeed. Consequently, they make good progress and achieve well. Where learners are a little more reluctant, teachers use skilful questioning and judicious use of praise that encourages effectively them to answer questions and share their knowledge and ideas. Most parents and carers, rightly, feel that their children are making good progress and that the school is helping their children to develop good communication, reading, and writing skills. Pupils also develop good independent learning skills. In a very successful literacy lesson, pupils worked confidently in groups, telling each other stories, taking part in role play activities at the fair trade 'shop' and devising interesting interview questions to ask when seeking other people's views. Pupils' good progress in reading was confirmed when the inspector looked at reading records and listened to pupils in Year 6 and in Year 2 read. Attainment in reading is, typically, broadly average at the end of Key Stage 1 and by the time pupils leave school. Work on classroom walls, in pupils' books, and the school's own detailed tracking system all confirmed the good progress that current pupils are making. Teaching assistants and teachers give very constructive, timely and sharply focused help to disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs so they make the same good progress as their peers.

Most children entered the current Reception class with skills levels in communication, language, literacy, and numeracy below those typical for their age. They make good progress in the stimulating and welcoming indoor and outdoor learning areas the school provides. Reception Year children enjoyed learning and made rapid progress in a numeracy lesson as they arranged tyres and milk crates enthusiastically to make a 'number story' that added up to ten. Pupils' good progress continues in Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2. For the last three years attainment in national tests at the end of Year 6 has been broadly average overall. In 2011, results were highest in English. Accelerating pupils' progress in mathematics to match their success in English is now, rightly, a focus for school improvement, especially the quality of pupils' mental calculations.

Quality of teaching

Teaching is good overall. Examples of particularly good teaching were seen in the Early Years Foundation Stage and in Years 5 and 6. In the most successful lessons, the pace of work is brisk. Challenging activities engage pupils' interest so they make good progress. Teachers' good use of interesting resources, their varied teaching methods, and use of information and communication technology engage the pupils' interest. Pupils are encouraged successfully to become confident, independent learners, while the planned teaching activities also support their good spiritual, moral, social, and cultural development. Older pupils asked perceptive questions and used sophisticated language to describe life in a small village in Ghana and contrast this with their own experiences in Cumbria. In the Reception class, pictures taken during a visit this week encouraged children to speak enthusiastically about their exciting trip to a local football club. They then developed their literacy and thinking skills well as they devised a thank-you letter to send to those who had looked after them.

Pupils' progress is tracked carefully and teaching assistants and teachers give skilled extra help, particularly in reading, to individuals and groups of pupils. The vast majority of parents and carers feel and inspection evidence confirms that their children are taught well. Several commented on the good extra help their children received and how this had enabled them to make faster progress. Pupils' work is marked regularly and teachers give them constructive feedback on how well they are doing. However, pupils have too few opportunities to learn by assessing their own and each other's work. Lesson objectives are made clear so the class knows what it has to achieve each lesson. However, the use of short-term individual targets is underdeveloped so pupils are not always sure how to take the next steps in their learning.

Teachers implement the planned curriculum well. Specialist sessions in the teaching of letters and sounds ensure pupils make good progress in their reading. However, opportunities for pupils to develop their mathematical skills across all areas of the curriculum, whilst satisfactory, are presently underdeveloped.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Pupils, typically, behave well in lessons and around the school. The school has a clear system of sanctions and rewards, which is applied consistently. Staff manage pupils' behaviour well. Good behaviour is praised and any low-level disruptive behaviour is corrected quickly. In the dining hall, pupils sit in mixed-age groups and older pupils talk with and look after younger children. Most pupils say they feel safe in school. They are knowledgeable about different types of bullying, including cyber-bullying. They say there is little bullying in school and this is always dealt with firmly and fairly. Most parents and carers agree that their children felt safe at school, but a very small minority expressed concerns about bullying. The inspection followed up these concerns rigorously and found that policies and procedures to deal with any bullying that may occur were firmly in place and any incidents of bullying were dealt with appropriately. The high priority the school places on keeping pupils safe is evident in the good training on the subject provided for teachers and teaching assistants. The training enabled them to deliver a well-thought-out assembly on ways in which pupils could help to keep themselves safe. Most pupils enjoy coming to school and this is reflected in their above-average attendance and good punctuality. Pupils say they have adults in school they know they can turn to should they have worries or concerns.

Leadership and management

The headteacher, staff and governing body have a clear vision for school improvement and a firm focus on accelerating pupils' progress further. Since the last inspection, pupils' good achievement has been sustained and consolidated. The tracking of pupils' progress has improved and the results of assessments are used well to plan learning and identify pupils who need extra help. Recently appointed staff have brought extra expertise to the leadership of teaching in the Early Years Foundation Stage and in mathematics and the refining and developing of new approaches to teaching. Effective performance management and good professional development are contributing to the school's good capacity to improve. However, new approaches to and best practice in developing pupils' skills in mental calculation have yet to be shared and developed fully. The governing body knows the school well and is very supportive of it. It monitors the school's work and helps to ensure that safeguarding requirements are fully met. Staff are well trained and fully aware of child protection and risk assessment procedures. The headteacher and the leader of the Early Years Foundation Stage share their expertise through good partnerships with other schools and organisations. Pupils benefit from strong links with other schools which ensure they make a smooth transition to the next stage of their education. The school promotes equal opportunities well. All groups of pupils, including those whose circumstances make them potentially vulnerable, make good progress in their learning. Discrimination of any kind is not tolerated.

The curriculum is very broad and balanced and is reviewed regularly. The school ensures an appropriate emphasis on both teaching basic skills and providing a creative wider curriculum which stimulates pupils' interest in learning. The richness and variety of the wider curriculum promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social, and cultural development especially well. Detailed studies of topics such as 'Chocolate' were promoting pupils' good understanding of other cultures successfully, like that of Ghana, and also of ethical issues such as Fair Trade. Pupils spoke with enormous enthusiasm about the wealth of enrichment activities which the school provides. They talked about activities as varied as taking part in ambitious dramatic productions such as *Romeo and Juliet*, producing exhibitions of their artwork based on the birds of the Solway Estuary and visiting a slate mine as part of a project on space. During the inspection, Year 1 and Year 2 pupils mastered new skills and enjoyed learning as they worked with an expert willow weaver to produce superbly constructed shelters in the school's wood.

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).

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.



9 March 2012

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Bowness-on-Solway Primary School, Wigton, CA7 5AF

Thank you for the warm welcome you gave me when I inspected your school this week. A particular 'thank you' goes to those of you who read aloud to me, filled in the questionnaires and were keen to tell me so much about your school. Please thank your parents and carers who also filled in the questionnaires. This is what I have said about your school in my report.

- Yours is a good school.
- Your behaviour is good and you show kindness and consideration to others.
- Your achievement is good because you make good progress and attain average standards.
- The teaching you receive is good.
- The way your school is led and managed and the curriculum you follow are good.

This is what I have asked your school to do to help it improve.

- Help you make even faster progress, especially in mathematics, by:
 - giving you more opportunities to practise your mathematical skills in all subjects
 - asking your teachers to share their best ideas for teaching mathematics.
- Make your lessons even better by:
 - giving you more opportunities to assess your own and each other's work
 - setting each of you very clear targets, so you know how to take the next steps in your learning.

All of you can help your school become even better by working with your teachers to achieve the very best you can.

Yours sincerely

Ann Ashdown
Lead inspector

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