

Lowther Endowed School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	112342
Local Authority	Cumbria
Inspection number	363791
Inspection dates	5–6 May 2011
Reporting inspector	John Heap

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	98
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Rachel Carruthers
Headteacher	Mrs Joy Ingram
Date of previous school inspection	24 January 2008
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. Six lessons were observed and involving four teachers. Meetings were held with groups of pupils, members of the governing body and staff. Inspectors observed the school's work. They looked at the school improvement plan, records of pupils' achievements, samples of the work in their books, minutes of the governing body meetings and school council meetings, teachers' planning and records relating to the budget. Fifty questionnaires from parents and carers were returned and analysed by inspectors.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at a number of key areas.

- How well pupils achieve and the rate of their progress in writing and numeracy to determine whether teaching is sufficiently challenging.
- How well the checks on pupils' achievements make an impact on pupils' progress, particularly in Key Stage 1.
- How well children are progressing in the Reception class.
- The impact of the curriculum on pupils' achievement and progress.
- How well leaders and managers, including subject leaders, are monitoring the work of the school, such as the quality of teaching.

Information about the school

Lowther Endowed is a smaller than average size primary school. The number of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is very small. The vast majority of pupils are from White British backgrounds, with very few pupils learning English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is above average. In the Early Years Foundation Stage, facilities are shared for some of the week with youngsters from the local playgroup.

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?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

Lowther Endowed is a good school. It is conspicuously successful in supporting pupils to become well-rounded, enthusiastic and articulate young learners. High among its assets is the pupils' very strong sense of being part of the school, and the local and broader communities. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Many parents and carers are appreciative of this and other strengths, and a typical view is, 'My child has thrived at Lowther.'

In recent years, there have been some concerns about pupils' behaviour. However, the school has successfully addressed the issues and behaviour is good and this is now the view of many parents and carers, the governing body, and all of the pupils and staff. The school has an effective and rigorous approach to care, guidance and support. This has been instrumental in ensuring that pupils have an outstanding perspective on safety.

Pupils' achievement is good and, by the age of 11, they have progressed well. Consequently, in recent years, attainment has been mostly above average. Any very rare dips in these standards have been due to the year-on-year differences in the overall ability of the groups of pupils. Although progress is generally good in Key Stage 1, by the age of seven, more-able pupils are not reaching the higher levels in writing and mathematics because they are not challenged enough to do so. This is because marking, although much improved from the time of the previous inspection, could be more rigorously linked to individual learning targets and provide greater challenge for pupils.

Lessons are well taught and the range of ages and abilities in most classes are catered for effectively. Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage thrive in the interesting and well-organised classroom and the excellent outside area. Throughout the school, pupils' work and attitudes are carefully and accurately checked and recorded. This allows teachers to make good and challenging choices from the successful curriculum. The overall breadth and balance of the curriculum is properly enhanced by the effective partnerships forged with parents and carers, local organisations and those further afield.

The school is well led and managed. School improvement is based on rigorous and well-informed self-evaluation and appropriate targets are set. These targets are being met and there is a well-proclaimed ambition to continue to make further progress. Consequently, the school's capacity for sustained improvement is good. Nevertheless, the information the school uses to measure the success of initiatives is not sufficiently detailed. Satisfactory governance is characterised by good levels of commitment and support. However, there is not enough independence in the way that the governing body gathers information to hold the school to account.

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What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise attainment further in Key Stage 1 in writing and mathematics by:
 - - improving the link between targets and marking
 - - ensuring the more-able pupils are fully challenged and reach the highest expectations.
- Further improve the rigour of leadership and management by:
 - - developing the monitoring and evaluation role of the governing body
 - - ensuring that the governing body has a plan for development that is supported by training
 - - sharpening the success criteria in the school improvement plan so that all in the school have a clearer picture of the level and depth of developments.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Pupils' achievement is good and they are progressing well, particularly in Years 5 and 6. Basic skills develop well and these are effectively used in other subjects, such as history. Interesting topics, such as one about the Titanic, show off pupils' literacy and information and communication technology (ICT) skills, and provide challenging opportunities for personal research. Older pupils know their learning targets and appreciate the direct comments they receive about whether they are achieving them. This is less noticeable in Key Stage 1, where written comments are not closely matched to the targets set.

Children enter Reception with broadly average skills and abilities for their age. Overall, by the time they leave Year 6, pupils' attainment is above, or well above, average. Any fluctuations in test results at the end of Year 6 are the result of the differing make-up of the small cohorts year-on-year. In Key Stage 1, the small number of more-able pupils makes good progress in reading. They make expected progress in writing and mathematics because there is not enough rigour in the use of marking to drive them towards the targets at the higher levels. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities throughout the school, and those learning English as an additional language benefit from good support and so make good progress, which often allows them to catch up with their peers.

Pupils told inspectors that they enjoy school. Younger pupils highly appreciate the very strong relationships they have with their older peers. The school council is a highly effective, busy and well-organised part of the school's organisation. It is involved in decision-making and communication and shows great pride in its, and the school's, achievements. Pupils make their views known through the wide variety of confidential boxes that are available. Pupils have forged very strong links with the local community through regular events, such as Friends' and Community lunches. The whole school is highly active in fundraising in the locality, for instance, with the Royal National Lifeboat Institute and globally, through links with a Ugandan school. Pupils are well prepared for the future because their attitudes to learning are very good. High levels of listening and collaborative skills mean that they learn well from staff, each other and external partners.

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These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

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

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

How effective is the provision?

The school rightly judges the quality of teaching as good. Teachers have good subject knowledge that challenges and supports the vast majority of pupils. They know their pupils well and organise their time effectively to provide appropriate guidance to the class, groups and individuals. Basic skills, such as the study of letter sounds, are taught throughout the school and to all abilities at the right level. This has led to improvements in spelling, for example. Most lessons are interesting and resourced well. For example, in a science lesson in Years 1 and 2 about healthy eating, there was a very wide range of fresh fruits to make healthy smoothies and this clearly supported the notion that healthy foods are a necessity to become a 'superhero'. In Key Stage 1, pupils receive a lot of verbal feedback on how well they are doing. However, for the small number of more-able pupils insufficient use is made of targets and comments in books. Many lessons include opportunities for pupils to use their literacy, numeracy and ICT skills. In a Year 5 and 6 English lesson, pupils' listening and reasoning skills were challenged when a well-chosen and highly evocative passage was read from a modern classic. The quality of this resource meant that pupils gained a good insight into an author's ability to excite the readers' and listeners' senses.

The good curriculum provides a broad and balanced programme for all abilities and gives strong opportunities for pupils to pursue their interests and make good progress in their learning. Pupils gain a great deal from the links and support provided by the whole staff,

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the local community and parents and carers. For example, the cook is fully involved in working with pupils on healthy eating; pupils enjoy the work that has emanated from the strong community links with the Forest School; interested parents and carers have worked very successfully to develop an excellent vegetable garden. Links with neighbouring schools, including the local secondary schools, provide opportunities, for example, for gifted and talented pupils to develop skills in music and sport.

The care and welfare of pupils are priorities for the school and, consequently, pupils feel extremely safe and have confidence in the adults who care for them. Effective induction procedures are in place and they ensure that pupils new to the school settle quickly and make progress. The school seeks support when they identify potentially vulnerable pupils, and there is plenty of evidence that the partnerships with outside agencies have raised the achievement of these pupils. There is a strong referral process that includes the early identification of any learning issues, prompt dialogue with parents and carers, and individual planning and the involvement of specialist support. Transition arrangements with other schools are good. The school is open in its discussions with secondary partners and shares information, such as records about vulnerable groups.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
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?

The school is well led. The headteacher provides a clear and ambitious direction for the school's work. Teaching and learning are regularly and systematically monitored and the headteacher has an accurate view of strengths and areas for development. Morale is strong and subject leaders support the headteacher well and this is leading to increasingly effective identification of improvement priorities. However, the school's measurable targets for success are not as sharp as they could be because they are related more to provision and activities than the outcomes for pupils and the meeting of targets.

The governing body brings a lot of expertise, support and commitment to the school, for example, in their efficient management and administration of finances. As a result, the school has found effective ways to improve the internal and external premises and maintain good staffing levels. However, the governing body recognises the need to strengthen its links with subject leaders, to increase the direct checking on the school's work and to have a wider role in holding the school to account. Currently, the governing body is too reliant on managers for the information that it receives and has not received enough appropriate training to upgrade members' skills in these areas. The school promotes community cohesion well through local, national and international initiatives. Examples of this include visits to a multi-ethnic school in Liverpool and active links with a

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Ugandan school. There is effective promotion of equal opportunities and, consequently, there are no signs of discrimination. However, the small number of more-able pupils in Year 2 makes only satisfactory progress in writing and mathematics and this means that they do not reach the higher levels. The school successfully safeguards its pupils. Monitoring of this aspect and record-keeping are robust and up-to-date. Recent improvements to the external boundaries have improved security.

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	3
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
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	2

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children make a good start in the Reception class because their induction to the class is well-organised; the provision is well-planned and imaginative and the teaching is consistently good. As a result, children make good progress. Staff are knowledgeable and experienced and ensure a secure and exciting environment where children learn well and happily. Staff work well together and have common, clear expectations of the children. The use of the excellent outdoor facilities is particularly ambitious and inspiring with lots of areas that promote learning and demand exploration. In particular, there are clear indications of the children developing curiosity and independence. Children happily and sensibly choose the activities they wish to take part in and there is a good balance between these choices and those that are led by adults. This wide range of activities has a significant impact on their personal development as well as developing basic number and literacy skills. The children develop good social skills, behave well and are helpful to each other.

Detailed records, such as the learning journey booklets, are kept of children's progress and staff use these well to match the activities to the full range of learning needs. These records are also shared with parents and carers, so that they have a clear picture of how their children are doing. Leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage

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are good and provide appropriate organisation and a calm and purposeful learning atmosphere.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2

Views of parents and carers

The majority of parents and carers who returned questionnaires are supportive of the school's work and appreciate the progress made by the school, both in the development of academic and personal skills and abilities. They are particularly happy with the way the school keeps their children safe; how well the school promotes healthy lifestyles; the good preparation for the future and their children's enjoyment of school. The vast majority of returns express satisfaction in the way that the school is led and managed. A minority of respondents suggest that the school does not deal effectively with unacceptable behaviour; their child's particular needs are not met and not enough progress is being made. Inspectors looked closely at these issues and found little evidence to support these concerns during this inspection, except for the need to raise standards for the more-able seven-year-old pupils.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Lowther Endowed 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 50 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 98 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	22	44	25	50	3	6	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	25	50	21	42	4	8	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	15	30	28	56	6	12	1	2
My child is making enough progress at this school	14	28	28	56	5	10	3	6
The teaching is good at this school	17	34	26	52	6	12	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	11	22	30	60	8	16	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	20	40	27	54	2	4	0	0
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)	12	24	27	54	3	6	1	2
The school meets my child's particular needs	15	30	25	50	9	18	1	2
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	12	24	28	56	4	8	5	10
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	12	24	28	56	6	12	2	4
The school is led and managed effectively	18	36	26	52	5	10	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	22	44	21	42	6	12	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 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	48	6	0
Primary schools	6	47	40	7
Secondary schools	12	39	38	11
Sixth forms	13	42	41	3
Special schools	28	49	19	4
Pupil referral units	14	45	31	10
All schools	10	46	37	7

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 are for the period 1 September 2010 to 31 December 2010 and 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.

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

Sixth form figures reflect the judgements made for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

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 pupils' 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.



09 May 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Lowther Endowed School, Penrith, CA10 2HT

On behalf of the inspection team, can I tell you that we really enjoyed our visit recently to your school. It is a good school. We appreciated very much the warm welcome, courtesy and help that you provided.

What we really liked about your school:

- the good start the children in the Reception class make
- the effective teaching that leads to good progress that you make in lessons and during the time you are in school
- your good behaviour, strong relationships and your good attitudes to school and work
- the good support the school provides for pupils who have extra learning needs and the good progress they make
- the interesting visits, visitors and partnerships with the community that add to your learning and your enjoyment of school
- the good care and welfare that is provided by all adults and how this helps you to feel exceptionally safe and confident
- the way the strong school council helps in the running of the school
- the effective leadership and management of the headteacher.

In order to make your school even better, we have asked that:

- pupils in Key Stage 1, particularly the more able, make even more progress in their writing and mathematics because of better use of their targets
- there are further improvements to the way that the school is run. You already have a say in the way that some decisions are made, and your teachers and the governing body appreciate the information that, for example, the school council provides.

Good luck for the future.

Yours sincerely,

John Heap

Lead Inspector

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