

Penny Bridge CofE School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	112360
Local authority	Cumbria
Inspection number	378474
Inspection dates	28–29 November 2011
Reporting inspector	Naomi Taylor

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	90
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Gary Wemyss
Headteacher	Lynn Smolinski
Date of previous school inspection	15 June 2009
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. Ten lessons were observed and five teachers seen. Meetings were held with groups of pupils, members of the governing body, parents and carers, and staff. The inspectors observed the school's work and looked at documentation including that related to safeguarding, assessment and progress, and school policies. They analysed 46 questionnaires from parents and carers, together with a sample from staff and pupils.

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

- How well the information on pupils' progress is used to ensure that all pupils are challenged fully in mixed-year-group classes.
- The opportunities provided across the curriculum to develop literacy, numeracy, and information and communication technology skills.
- How well the school works with parents and carers to help them to promote their children's learning.
- The use of the outdoor learning space to provide teacher-led and child-initiated activities for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage.

Information about the school

Penny Bridge is a smaller than average-size primary school serving a wide area. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is well-below average. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is similar to the national average. All pupils are White British and none speaks English as an additional language. In Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2, there are two year groups in each class. The school is an Eco-school, is accredited with Healthy Schools status, and is also recognised as a Sing-Up School. It is a member of the local Innovation Group and Furness Primary Heads Partnership.

Since the last inspection, there have been significant changes to the staffing structure, which include the headteacher being employed for four days per week instead of five. That enables her to utilise the fifth day to be involved in the management of the privately-run nursery, which is based on the school premises. That facility is also used to provide before- and after-school clubs, as well as holiday activities. That provision did not form part of this inspection, but a report of its quality can be found 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: how good is the school?

1

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

1

Main findings

Penny Bridge is an outstanding primary school, which, as one parent described, 'provides a warm and nurturing environment.' Attainment is above average and improving. Pupils' overall academic achievement is good and their personal development is excellent. The very strong outcomes are due to: exceptional leadership and management; good, and at times outstanding, teaching; a curriculum of excellent quality; first-class promotion of equality of opportunity; pupils' outstanding behaviour and attitudes to learning. All the staff know each individual pupil very well and provide excellent care, guidance and support, so that pupils feel extremely safe in school. Pupils know how to look after themselves and one another extremely well. They have a good understanding of how to lead a healthy lifestyle and this is reflected in their participation in a range of extra-curricular activities. The school plays a very important part in the life of the village and pupils gain an excellent understanding of their role in the local and wider community. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. Attendance is high and most pupils arrive punctually.

The Early Years Foundation Stage is good and, as a result, children get off to a good start to their formal education. They settle quickly, due to the effective links with parents and carers and with the on-site and other nurseries. While the provision offers the opportunity for indoor and outdoor learning, there are sometimes missed opportunities for children to develop numeracy and literacy skills in order to improve further their learning and progress. Throughout the school, teachers and teaching assistants plan their lessons well to ensure all pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, make good progress. That reflects the school's excellent commitment to equality of opportunity. The curriculum includes opportunities for work across age groups through 'critical skills challenges,' which have an extremely positive impact on developing teamwork. Excellent partnerships bring visiting professionals to the school, adding an extra dimension to learning which the school alone cannot provide.

Since the last inspection, the overall effectiveness of the school has improved. That is as a result of the excellent leadership provided by the headteacher and the commitment of all staff and volunteers. The leadership team is rigorous in evaluating accurately how well the school is doing and making any necessary changes to improve further the learning opportunities for pupils. Thorough tracking and monitoring by all teachers ensure early interventions to address underperformance

and this is having an impact on accelerating pupils' progress further. There is a track record of predicting outcomes for learners accurately and making a detailed forecast for the next three years. Supported by an effective governing body, the school has outstanding capacity to sustain improvement. The school provides excellent value for money.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the learning and progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage by extending the opportunities to develop numeracy and literacy skills through both indoor and outdoor provision.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

1

Pupils very much enjoy coming to school and this is reflected in their very good punctuality and excellent attendance. They work well in class and are keen to succeed. As a result, their achievement by the time they leave school is good. Most children enter the school with skills that are broadly in line with those expected for their age group. They make good progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Throughout Key Stages 1 and 2, pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, continue to make good progress. By the end of Year 6, attainment across English and mathematics combined has been above the national average over recent years. This is reflected in the attainment of the current Year 6. Pupils apply these skills well in other subjects. For example, numeracy skills have been used in a Treasure Island topic to find a hidden treasure using coordinates. During a science lesson in Years 3 and 4, good information and communication technology (ICT) skills were also demonstrated as the pupils worked diligently in pairs to explore different strengths and angles of light and discovered the impact these have on altering size and shades of shadows. Combined with high-quality teamwork, pupils' above-average attainment and high attendance equips them well for their future lives.

Pupils' behaviour is outstanding and pupils say they feel extremely safe and secure in school. That is reflected in the respectful way that they treat each other, adults and visitors. The older pupils enjoy taking on responsibilities and provide excellent role models for the younger children. For example, when the children join the Reception class, they are mentored by Year 6 pupils to help them to settle into school. The Healthy Schools status is reflected in pupils' good understanding and adoption of healthy lifestyles. It is seen also in the high proportion of pupils participating in the wide range of extra-curricular activities. Many pupils play a musical instrument and the choir and ensembles contribute hugely to the local and wider community by performing regularly in a range of venues. The school council and Eco-group are active in instigating fund-raising activities and caring for the local environment through, for example, recycling projects.

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	1
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	1
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1

How effective is the provision?

All lessons seen by the inspectors were at least good and some were outstanding. In the basic skills sessions at the start of the school day, pupils are grouped according to ability, no matter what their age. In those and most other lessons, work proceeds at a quick pace and is matched well to pupils' needs. The teaching assistants and volunteers are deployed extremely well to provide support and/or intervention work and they make a valuable contribution. It ensures all pupils make good, and sometimes better, progress. Occasionally, too long is spent on whole-class introductions, when the more-able pupils could be making a start on their independent learning. Good use is made of varied resources, including ICT, and this engages pupils' interests, so that they enjoy learning. 'Talk Partners' and peer, group and self-assessment are regular features in lessons. They enable pupils to share their views, reinforce their learning and understand how to improve their work. From the Reception class through to Year 6, pupils are encouraged to develop independent learning skills. They enjoy that greatly and such work is helping to accelerate their progress. The marking policy adopted across the school includes 'next steps' to inform pupils on how to improve their work, but pupils do not always complete extension work. Assessment information is used well to identify where pupils have gaps in their learning and to give them the extra help that they need to improve.

The curriculum is reviewed regularly and meets the needs of pupils outstandingly well. The creative curriculum has supported the school in achieving Artsmark award and brings different subjects together to engage pupils in learning. Similarly, the 'critical skills challenge', which the pupils enjoy thoroughly, brings pupils of all ages together to work as a team and develop enterprise skills. Across the whole curriculum, there is a strong focus on developing literacy and numeracy skills and this is impacting on accelerating progress and raising pupils' attainment in these areas. There is a wealth of extra-curricular activities, including gardening club, sports and a wide range of instrumental ensembles and a choir. The school wins music competitions regularly, demonstrating the high standards that pupils achieve in this area.

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

Parents and carers appreciate the exceptional care that their children receive in school. Very well-targeted support from staff and a range of external agencies help all pupils to make the most of the pupils' time in school. All aspects of pastoral care provision are excellent and welcomed by the vast majority of families. Pupils leaving this small village school at the end of Year 6 are well prepared for the next stage in their education and many return to the school to enjoy the Friday night youth club, which is run by the headteacher on a voluntary basis.

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	1
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

Excellent leadership and management by the headteacher are acknowledged by the vast majority of parents and carers. One parent's comments reflected the views of many, saying that they are 'lucky to have such a lovely, well-run school in our village.' There is a very strong sense of teamwork across all staff and volunteers and the governing body provides good support and challenge. Its members discharge their statutory duties well and are avid supporters of the school, engaging in many social activities by, for example, attending concerts in the local church. The school's accurate self-evaluation results in cogent action plans that target appropriate areas for development. The plans have led to significant improvements in teaching and learning. There is evidence of the staff driving improvement and accelerating progress, as seen by the impact of the basic skills sessions at the start of the school day. The quality of teaching is monitored rigorously and outcomes are shared and fed into performance management targets, to excellent effect.

Safeguarding procedures and policies are good and child protection training is up to date. They contribute to pupils saying they feel extremely safe and secure in school. Safeguarding arrangements are monitored and evaluated by the governing body. There is a strong commitment to providing the best for all pupil, and discrimination is not tolerated. The school works with a range of external agencies to provide support for pupils and their families. Pupils with a statement of special educational needs are fully integrated into all aspects of school life. Overall, the promotion of equal opportunity is excellent.

Community cohesion is extremely strong within the local area. While there is evidence of international links, for example, with a school in Tanzania, the school is still in the early stages of developing more overseas links and links with schools with very different contexts to its own in this country. Excellent partnerships with external organisations bring visitors into school and experiences that the school alone could not provide, for example, the Native American Dance workshop.

These are the grades for the leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	1
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	1
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
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	1
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	1

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children settle very quickly into the Reception class, due to the very good transition arrangements from the on-site nursery, other nurseries, and as a result of the relationships built up with children and their families. The children make good progress in many areas of learning during their time in the Reception class.

Overall, the provision for the children is good. The children have opportunities to explore for themselves and to develop independent learning in a stimulating environment both indoors and outside. The latter is somewhat limited, but this is compensated for by using the tree-house in the nursery at certain times of the week and the school's extensive grounds and garden area. Children play happily together and form good relationships with adults and their Year 6 mentors. The children sang enthusiastically with the older pupils in the whole-school assembly and their behaviour was exceptional.

The good-quality teaching includes a balance of teacher-led and child-initiated activities. Children's progress is assessed carefully and planning takes into account the needs of each child. However, both indoors and outdoors, opportunities are sometimes missed to extend children's learning, particularly in the areas of reading, writing and number calculations. For example, the gathering of plants from outdoors was used effectively to develop vocabulary when children returned to the classroom. However, it was not also used to develop children's linking of sounds and letters, or to reinforce their learning of numbers adding up to five, which most of the children had found particularly difficult earlier in the day. The Early Years Foundation Stage manager has a strong commitment to the children's care, safety and welfare, and leads the setting well.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation stage	2
Taking into account:	2
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2

The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage The effectiveness of leadership and management in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
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Views of parents and carers

A very large majority of parents and carers is satisfied with this school. Almost all believe that teaching is good, that the school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour and that their children are happy at school. Reference was made to the 'friendly and approachable staff.'

There were very few concerns. Of these, some referred to a desire for better communication between school and home. In addition to the open-door policy, availability of staff at the start and end of the school day, reports and newsletters, a Parents Forum has been formed to provide an alternative channel of communication between school and home and this has already led to some positive changes in the school. A few parents and carers felt the school did not prepare their children well for the future. Inspectors followed up that concern and found that, as a result of pupils' above-average attainment, high attendance and very good punctuality, together with their well-developed team skills, they are well prepared for the next stage of their education and life.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Penny Bridge CofE 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 inspector received 46 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 90 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	29	63	16	35	1	2	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	31	67	14	30	1	2	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	26	57	17	37	3	7	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	28	61	15	33	1	2	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	25	54	17	37	1	2	1	2
The school helps me to support my child's learning	25	54	15	33	4	9	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	27	59	16	35	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)	21	46	16	35	4	9	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	24	52	16	35	1	2	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	21	46	20	43	1	2	3	7
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	21	46	18	39	4	9	2	4
The school is led and managed effectively	28	61	12	26	1	2	2	4
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	28	61	15	33	1	2	1	2

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	43	47	10	0
Primary schools	6	46	42	6
Secondary schools	14	36	41	9
Sixth forms	15	42	41	3
Special schools	30	48	19	3
Pupil referral units	14	50	31	5
All schools	10	44	39	6

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 2010 to 08 April 2011 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.



30 November 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Penny Bridge CofE School, Ulverston, LA12 7RQ

Thank you for the very warm welcome we received when the inspection team came to visit your school recently. We enjoyed our time with you and appreciated all the help you gave us. A particular thank you to those who gave their time to talk to the inspectors about what you enjoy most about school.

Penny Bridge is an outstanding school. You get on very well together, behave extremely well and take great care of each other. Also, you feel very safe because all the adults take such good care of you. The members of the school council, Eco-group and those who take on responsibilities to look after the younger children do a wonderful job in helping the school to run smoothly. Most of you enjoy coming to school and this is reflected in your excellent attendance. In lessons, you show that you are keen to learn, you work hard and you are making good progress. There have been many improvements since the last inspection.

You can help to keep your school outstanding by maintaining your very good attendance and keeping up with your work. We have asked that the children in the Early Years Foundation Stage have every opportunity to develop literacy and numeracy skills during indoor and outdoor activities.

Please accept our best wishes for the future. We hope you continue to enjoy your school.

Yours sincerely

Naomi Taylor
Lead inspector (on behalf of the inspection team)

