

Beckermat Church of England Primary School

Mill Lane, Beckermat, Cumbria, CA21 2YD

Inspection dates

24–25 October 2012

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Inadequate	4
	This inspection:	Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Pupils thrive in this happy and welcoming school. The supportive atmosphere helps them grow in confidence and feel safe.
- Pupils make good progress and achieve above average standards by the end of Year 6. Younger pupils in the Reception, Year 1 and Year 2 classes are now making more rapid progress than they have previously and are achieving well.
- Teaching is mostly good and there is some that is outstanding. Pupils thoroughly enjoy lessons because they are full of interesting activities that extend their learning.
- Pupils behave very well. They are considerate and polite in shared areas of the school. They always try their best in lessons.
- The headteacher provides good, purposeful leadership. Her high expectations are shared by staff, who enthusiastically share good ideas and best practice. Good teamwork is driving improvements in teaching and learning.
- Leaders and governors have fully tackled inadequacies identified at the last inspection. Governors have developed their skills and challenge and support leaders effectively.
- Parents have full confidence in leaders and teachers. They reported that 'teachers are always approachable and children are happy to come to school'.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Teaching is not yet outstanding in all lessons. Occasionally, work is not set at a high enough level to enable pupils to learn new skills at a rapid pace.
- Teachers' explanations, questioning and prompts are not always clear enough.
- Standards in pupils' writing at the end of Year 2 have been below average for the last three years and reading declined in 2012.
- New approaches to marking and the teaching of reading and writing have just been introduced. Leaders have not had time to evaluate what works best.

Information about this inspection

- The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors.
- The inspector observed teaching in nine lessons. She carried out a scrutiny of pupils' work, with the headteacher, in order to gain a view of pupils' current achievement and their progress over time.
- Meetings were held with seven representatives of the governing body, a representative of Cumbria local authority, the headteacher and teachers.
- The inspector met with groups of pupils and spoke with them in lessons and around the school.
- The inspector looked at a number of documents including the school's self-evaluation, development planning, records on the quality of teaching, provisional results in 2012 of standardised assessment tasks and tracking of pupils' progress.
- The inspector took account of eight responses to Ofsted's online parent questionnaire, Parent View, and spoke with a large number of parents and grandparents informally when they picked up their children.

Inspection team

Jean Kendall, Lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Full report

In accordance with section 13 (5) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the school no longer requires significant improvement.

Information about this school

- This is a much smaller than average primary school situated in Beckermeth village adjacent to the Sellafield power plant.
- All pupils are from White British backgrounds. Some come from Beckermeth village and many travel from outlying rural locations.
- Staff have identified a larger than average proportion of pupils who have special educational needs. This group has extra support from the school through 'school action'.
- A smaller than average proportion have a statement of special educational needs or have extra support because they are identified at 'school action plus'.
- The government provides extra funding for pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals, who are looked after by the local authority or are children of families in the services through the pupil premium. The proportion of pupils eligible to be supported by the pupil premium is smaller than average.
- The school exceeds the government's floor targets which set the minimum standards and rate of progress expected of primary aged pupils.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching by making sure that:
 - activities introduce new skills at a rapid enough pace in all lessons and give pupils opportunities to apply them to their independent work
 - teachers provide clear explanations and questions that deepen pupils' understanding
 - new approaches to marking and to teaching reading and writing are monitored to make sure changes are raising pupils' achievement.
- Raise standards at Key Stage 1, particularly in reading and writing, and sustain the above average standards being achieved at Key Stage 2 by making sure that:
 - group activities enable pupils to build on their reading and writing skills rapidly in the Reception, Year 1 and Year 2 classes
 - pupils who have underachieved in the past receive support to make more rapid progress in Key Stage 2.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

is good

- When pupils leave at the end of Year 6 they achieve standards that are above the national average in reading, writing and mathematics. These good standards have been sustained over the last three years. Progress is good and in 2012 all pupils reached the expected level in both English and mathematics and almost half of them achieved higher levels.
- Children join the school in the Reception class with varying pre-school experiences. Most children have good speaking and mathematical skills but the reading, writing and physical skills of some are below expectations for children their age. Children settle confidently into the mixed Reception and Year 1 class. They learn and play happily together, in purposeful activities that develop their skills in a fun way.
- Most pupils make expected progress from their starting points but this has not been rapid enough to secure average standards at the end of Year 2 in writing over the last three years. Standards in reading were also below average in 2012. Teachers have taken effective action to halt this trend and make sure pupils make more rapid progress in Reception and Years 1 and 2.
- Teachers are building on pupils' reading and writing skills step by step and giving them lots of opportunities to practise and refine their emerging skills. Pupils in Year 1, for example, produced some very creative and well-formed independent writing based on 'Room on a Broom'. Pupils in the current Year 2 class are now achieving expected or better standards in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Teachers have recently introduced new resources and a number of small group activities to promote early reading and writing skills. These are ensuring that pupils develop a range of strategies to support reading and writing, including the sounds that letters make (phonics). However, there are a few occasions when pupils' progress slows because activities are not set at just the right level and pupils go over what they already know.
- School leaders are making good use of additional funding (pupil premium) to support pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals. They have bought in extra support from teaching assistants and provided additional, targeted training to help teachers attend to pupils' specific learning needs in class. Pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals make equally good progress and achieve at the same standard as other pupils in the school.
- Pupils with disabilities and those who have special educational needs also receive good quality extra help. They make good progress from their starting points and often achieve above the levels of similar pupils nationally.

The quality of teaching

is good

- The majority of teaching is good and some is outstanding. Teachers get to know the pupils very well in the mixed age classes. They usually plan activities effectively to build on previous learning and take account of pupils' interests and needs.
- Most lessons keep pupils actively involved and provide good opportunities for investigation and solving problems. For example, pupils in Year 2 made good gains in their understanding of standardised measures as they estimated and checked the lengths of various objects in and out of the classroom. Pupils in Years 3 and 4 enjoyed recording their friends' preferred author as they learned to capture and interpret information in a Venn diagram.
- Some lessons really inspire and motivate pupils. An excellent lesson in the Year 5/6 class fully captivated pupils in a creative writing activity with a mysterious visual stimulus and timely prompts from the teacher. Pupils were eager to share their highly creative story openings and spontaneously took turns to read them out aloud in their best 'mysterious' voices. It was magical!
- In the most effective lessons teachers give very clear explanations and useful examples so that pupils understand new learning and the activities they are expected to complete. Teachers ask

questions to probe pupils' understanding and adapt their teaching accordingly. There are a few occasions when explanations and questioning lack such clarity, meaning that pupils do not gain such an in-depth understanding.

- In the majority of lessons activities provide the right amount of challenge for all groups of pupils and make sure they all make good progress. This is because teachers know the pupils very well and plan activities that are suitable for every pupil's needs. Assessment is used well to adapt teaching and make sure pupils, including disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs, receive any support they need. Teaching assistants provide good support in class and in small groups.
- In a few instances, particularly in group sessions which focus on the teaching of early reading and writing skills, activities are not as well matched to pupils' learning needs. A few pupils are not placed in the right groups and activities are too easy for them. Pupils do not sustain their usual high levels of interest in such activities because there is little new learning and they are not required to think for themselves. Pupil groups are soon to be reviewed.
- Pupils' work is marked in accordance with the school's new marking policy. Younger pupils are given verbal feedback, appropriate to their age, so they know what they have done well and how their work could be made better. Older pupils receive clear written feedback and criteria to check their own or others' work. However, not all pupils are aware of their learning targets and pupils do not always act on comments to improve subsequent work.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Staff are caring, respectful and set an excellent example for pupils' behaviour. Pupils are happy to come to school, their attendance is excellent and none have ever been excluded. Parents are entirely satisfied that behaviour is good and effectively dealt with on the rare occasion when it is not.
- Pupils find learning interesting and fun, saying, for example, 'lessons are good because we do lots of different activities'. They enjoy persevering with difficult work and say that 'teachers will always help you understand'. They feel confident to give their views and try out ideas.
- All staff and pupils uphold the behaviour code. Occasionally, pupils become distracted if work is not challenging enough but they are never disruptive. A few pupils who struggle with their behaviour are supported well and know the consequences of unacceptable behaviour.
- Pupils have excellent relationships with each other and staff. Older pupils support younger children wonderfully. For example, 'play buddies' make sure all pupils are involved in playground games and help them out if they are upset. They support them in reading and as class prefects.
- Pupils also make an excellent contribution to the running of the school. Pupils in Year 6 take pride in their various roles such as 'class prefect', 'book corner monitor', 'dinner number collector' and 'hall preparer' and make sure they do the job well.
- Pupils have a good understanding of safety and unsafe situations, including on the internet. They understand the difference between 'falling out' and bullying and know of different types of bullying. They say they feel safe in school and are sure that 'there is no bullying here'.
- Pupils' views are echoed by parents. They are entirely confident that their children are safe and well looked after, reporting that they have 'never been aware of any bullying or poor behaviour' and 'children can't wait to get to school and always come home smiling'.

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher provides strong, purposeful and supportive leadership. She regularly checks on the quality of teaching and ensures that actions taken to improve the school are working. She knows the strengths of the school and areas that require development extremely well. Any weaknesses in teaching are followed up with training and support.
- The headteacher and governors have set appropriate targets for teachers to improve through

'performance management'. Their targets are linked to whole school development priorities and their own professional development. The headteacher has made the right decisions about teachers' progression up the salary scale linked to the quality of teaching. However, teachers' performance targets are not always explicitly linked with the impact of teaching and achievement of pupils in their classes.

- All staff have leadership roles in this small school and make a good contribution to improve teaching and raise pupils' achievement. They are keen to attend training to develop their skills and enthusiastically share what they have learned with each other. Teaching has improved since the last inspection and pupils of all abilities are achieving higher standards.
- A number of new approaches and policies have been introduced since the last inspection, including a marking policy, new approaches to teaching early reading and writing, and a focus on guided reading and writing across the whole school. Staff have embraced the changes and are working hard to ensure they are successful. However, there are still some inconsistencies and staff are still getting to know what works best. School leaders and governors are aware that they will need to evaluate the impact of these new initiatives to ensure they continue to raise pupils' achievement.
- The curriculum has an increased focus on the promotion of pupils' skills in reading, writing and mathematics. This is ensuring that pupils make more rapid progress from their starting points and those with gaps in their learning are supported as they move through the school. Care is also being taken to ensure the curriculum maintains its breadth through themed work and 'creative days'.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural skills are extremely well developed through lessons, various after school activities and the school's strong links with the local community and church. Pupils develop good social skills through collaborative working and a good understanding of moral and cultural issues.
- The school received intensive support from the local authority following the last inspection, which gave it a notice to improve. Governors and staff have benefited from some good quality training and regular visits from the school's adviser. The support has appropriately decreased as school leaders and governors have demonstrated the ability to drive improvements forward and tackle issues as they arise.
- Teachers are enthusiastic and always looking for ways to make learning interesting for pupils. The standards achieved by pupils at the end of Year 6 have risen and achievement in Year 2 shows improvement. Issues which led to the notice to improve have been fully resolved. Leaders have good capacity to continue this trend of improvement.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors and school leaders have fully tackled the health and safety issues that led to the notice to improve at the last inspection. Safeguarding procedures are detailed and comprehensive so the school is safe for all pupils. Governors have developed their skills through training and established effective committees to oversee core aspects of the school's work such as standards, finance and teaching. They show great commitment to the school and determination to build on the improvements and raise standards even further. They have a good understanding of strengths and weaknesses and effectively manage the performance of the headteacher.

What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	112345
Local authority	Cumbria
Inspection number	386131

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	89
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Alan Shepherd
Headteacher	Mrs Barbara Mayer
Date of previous school inspection	14 July 2011
Telephone number	01946 841221
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