

Houghton C of E School

Jackson Road, Houghton, Carlisle, Cumbria, CA3 0PA

Inspection dates

8–9 November 2012

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	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 of all backgrounds thrive in this happy school. They are well cared for and grow in confidence.
- Pupils make good progress and achieve well. They are now making more progress than they were at the time of the last inspection, especially in reading.
- Teaching is good and some is outstanding. Pupils become engrossed in learning and find lessons fun.
- Pupils behave very well and try their best in all things. They are respectful, well mannered and enjoy helping each other.
- The headteacher provides good leadership and expects the very best from pupils and staff. Good teamwork prevails and everyone is clear how the school can improve further.
- Areas needing improvement at the last inspection have been attended to. Teaching is better. This is because leaders and governors check on the quality of teaching and tackle improvement firmly.
- There are good links with parents. They are confident their children are safe and taught well.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Teaching is not outstanding. Although work is set for different pupils it is not always at the right level for each individual.
- Pupils with prolonged absence from school do not always receive the teaching they need to catch up with their learning.
- Not enough pupils reach standards higher than expected for their age in writing and some are unsure how to check and improve their work. Marking does not always help pupils to improve their writing.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed teaching in all classes and saw nine lessons. This included the headteacher conducting two joint observations with the inspector.
- The inspector looked at the work in pupils' books to get a view of current achievement and their progress over time. He spoke to groups of pupils to get their view of, amongst other things, what they enjoy, how teaching helps them to learn and what they think about behaviour. He also observed one whole-school assembly.
- The inspector took account of 30 responses from parents to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) and spoke to a number of parents as they brought their children to school.
- Meetings were held with six members of the governing body, teaching and classroom support staff, two representatives from the local authority and a friend of the school from the local organic farm.
- The inspector looked at a number of documents, including the school's self-evaluation, records of the quality of teaching, the improvement plan, provisional results in 2012 of standardised assessment tasks and the school's tracking of pupils' progress.
- The inspector heard pupils read and checked the school's records of pupils' progress in reading.

Inspection team

David Law, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This is a smaller than average sized primary school.
- Most pupils are from White British backgrounds but a sizeable minority (about one quarter of the school roll) are from Gypsy/Roma and Traveller backgrounds.
- Staff have identified a smaller than average proportion of pupils who are supported through school action.
- A higher than average proportion of pupils have a statement of special educational needs or are supported at school action plus.
- The proportion of pupils supported through the pupil premium is smaller than average. 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.
- The school exceeds the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching so more is outstanding by:
 - making sure work is always set at the right level to meet pupils' different needs and abilities
 - providing additional teaching support to help pupils catch up when they return to school following a prolonged absence.
- Raise standards of attainment in writing, particularly so more pupils reach the higher levels by:
 - helping pupils to check and improve their own work
 - making sure that teachers' marking of pupils' work consistently shows them how to improve.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

is good

- Most children join the Reception class with skills, knowledge and understanding below those typical for their age. They play and learn happily together making good progress because they find activities enjoyable. There were lots of happy giggles when the teacher, dressed as the gurgling 'sink monster', acted out the sound of the letter 'g.'
- Good progress is maintained through Key Stage 1, where pupils' standards of attainment have risen steadily over the last three years to above average levels in 2012. Pupils develop their reading skills well and their ability to use the sounds that letters make (phonics) is now above national levels by the end of Year 1.
- Pupils at Key Stage 1 are keen to write and some draft longer pieces of work in well formed handwriting. Writing standards have risen but by the end of Year 2 fewer reach the higher levels than is seen nationally.
- In Years 1 and 2, pupils are eager to learn about numbers and make good progress in mathematics. In one lesson, pupils made rapid progress when learning about the patterns numbers make and some were able to predict how a sequence would carry on.
- Over the past three years, standards of attainment at the end of Year 6 have been average, which represents good progress as most of these pupils entered school with below average skills. Currently, progress is good in all classes and particularly strong in reading because pupils enjoy books and read widely.
- In mathematics, more Key Stage 2 pupils are reaching the higher levels. In one outstanding Year 3 lesson, more-able pupils skilfully solved problems with fractions. Older pupils at Key Stage 2 produced accurate graphs of lambing data following a visit to the local organic farm.
- Across Key Stage 2, pupils generally make good progress in learning to write. Older pupils can write neatly and at length, for example, when writing a biography of the Egyptologist Howard Carter. However, too few reach the higher levels by the end of Year 6. Across the key stage, pupils are not confident enough in checking their work to make improvements to it.
- Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs receive good extra help and make good progress from their starting points. For some, progress in reading is outstanding. They gain a firm grasp of how to use their knowledge of the sounds that letters make and learn to recognise key words on sight.
- Gypsy Roma pupils make good progress overall because all staff make sure they have equal opportunity to learn and that relations amongst all pupils and staff are harmonious. However, where Gypsy Roma pupils have prolonged absence they miss learning and need to catch up.
- Pupils known to be eligible for support through the pupil premium make good progress. The gap between how well these pupils are doing and others is narrower in this school than it is nationally because the school has made wise use of funding and bought additional classroom resources and provided further teaching assistant support.
- Many pupils make good progress in music because of the good quality support provided. The guitar players showed great skill during the remembrance assembly and received warm applause.

The quality of teaching

is good

- Teaching is good throughout the school and in some lessons it is outstanding. It is often lively and energetic and creates a buzz of interest amongst pupils. Lessons are well organised, practical and interesting.
- Teachers expect pupils to work hard. They explain clearly what they want pupils to do. Questions are used well to make pupils think and teachers are skilled at giving pupils the confidence and opportunity to answer.

- Teachers' good subject knowledge in English helps pupils to make good progress. In one outstanding Year 4 lesson, drama was used exceptionally well to teach pupils how to write speech. Pupils re-interpreted and acted the story of Hansel and Gretel complete with dialogue in a threatening 'witchy voice.'
- Reading is taught well so pupils of all abilities make good progress. In one session, the teacher taught letters and sounds in an exciting way by taking the role of a swashbuckling pirate who only let them 'escape' if they could say the correct letter sounds.
- Technology is used well to support pupils' learning with interactive whiteboards a feature of many lessons. In one outstanding mathematics lesson in Year 3, new learning was acquired quickly when pupils used a computer programme to help them understand compass points.
- Some pupils find it difficult to check and improve their writing and require more support to do so. This is achieved in some classes when pupils are given time to respond to teachers' marking at the start of the lesson but the practice is not yet prevalent across the school.
- Teachers do not always plan their work well enough to get the best out of some pupils. This is because work is usually set at the same level for a particular group within a class so progress is not as quick as it could be. In the best lessons, groups are re-organised to cater for the different range of needs and abilities as teachers recognise them but this good practice is not consistently seen.
- There is regular homework which works well in helping pupils to read but there is no formal way to provide additional teaching support for pupils who return to school after a prolonged absence.
- Achievement has improved since the last inspection because teaching is now good throughout the school. Pupils say teachers help them a lot and make lessons fun. In all classes, teachers and pupils get on well together and pupils show a zest for learning.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Pupils always try their very best in lessons and behaviour in class is often excellent. They are highly motivated and listen well to instructions. They work cooperatively with others when required and get on independently when they need to.
- A calm and orderly atmosphere prevails around the school. Pupils conduct themselves sensibly and show great consideration for others. During the two minutes silence to commemorate those who have fallen in wars and conflict, pupils showed great respect and the whole school was hushed.
- At playtimes, pupils enjoy being 'playground buddies' and looking after others. One typical comment was 'everyone gets on well together.'
- Pupils say they feel very safe in school and parents agree. Pupils have a secure knowledge of how to keep safe, for example when using the internet.
- School records show bullying is very rare and pupils confirm this. They are entirely confident that adults help them if they are feeling upset or have a problem. The school has a relevant programme to teach pupils about different forms of bullying and how to deal with it and consequently pupils' knowledge of this is good.
- Attendance is above average for most groups but below average for Gypsy Roma pupils. The school works hard to ensure good attendance but there is no formal way of providing extra teaching for pupils who have prolonged absence and need to catch up with their learning.

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher gives strong leadership and provides clear direction putting improved teaching and achievement at the centre of the school's work. All staff are on board and work together successfully and this has contributed to the strong improvement since the last inspection.
- The headteacher is supported well in improving the school by an able deputy headteacher. All teachers eagerly take responsibility for leading aspects of the school's work and do this well. Priorities for improvement are agreed and acted on with commitment and resolution.
- Much has been done by school leaders to bring about the continual improvement of teaching. Training is relevant and geared to the needs of the whole school as well as individual members of staff.
- Leaders and governors have set targets for teachers and all teachers can say what it is they would like to improve in their work and what they are doing about it. Decisions about progression up the salary scale are informed by evidence of how well teaching promotes learning in the classroom. Teaching has improved since the last inspection.
- There are good methods for checking on the quality of teaching and for making sure that actions taken to improve the school are working. This is well led by the headteacher and she is ably supported by all other staff because everyone is keen to take responsibility and gain new skills.
- School leaders carefully track how well pupils are doing and there are regular meetings to review progress. This information is used well to target support, for example in reading, and since the last inspection achievement has risen for pupils of all abilities. Methods to direct additional teaching support to those returning from absence are still being developed.
- School leaders have sharpened the focus on helping pupils to use their reading, writing and mathematical skills through links with other subjects and this is ensuring that pupils make more rapid progress from their starting points. For example, visits to the local organic farm have been linked to topics in literacy, history and science. Pupils grew vegetables, harvested, prepared and cooked them just like the 'Land Army' in the Second World War.
- School leaders and governors have made good use of the pupil premium funding. This has been spent on providing additional support, for example, the purchase of I Pads for pupils, and the gaps between how well these pupils are doing and others in the school and nationally are closing, as a result.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are very well promoted through lessons, other activities in school and strong links with the local community and with the church. The Remembrance Day assembly, for example, enabled pupils to reflect deeply and had a strong sense of respect for the service of others.
- Leaders and governors value the support provided by the local authority. This has helped relevant links to be made with other schools locally and teachers are keen to learn from these.
- Leaders and managers, together with teachers and governors, are continually looking for ways in which learning can be made interesting for pupils. As a result, since the last inspection, achievement has improved and teaching is stronger. Areas for improvement have been firmly tackled. The school's leadership has shown it is capable of continuing to make good improvements.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors and school leaders work well together and share a common view about the direction the school should take. Governors are ambitious for all pupils to do well. They are active in the life of the school and show considerable commitment. The governing body ensures that the school is a safe place and all safeguarding requirements are met. Since the last inspection, governors have developed their ability to challenge school leaders and hold them to account. Governors show a good grasp of the school's strengths and what it needs to improve and ably manage the performance of the headteacher and value her contribution.

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	112250
Local authority	Cumbria
Inspection number	401251

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	139
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Malcolm Scott
Headteacher	Lindsey Burnie
Date of previous school inspection	28 September 2009
Telephone number	01228 593992
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