

Askam Village School

Lots Road, Askam-in-Furness, Cumbria, LA16 7DA

Inspection dates

6–7 February 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	Requires improvement	3
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Requires improvement	3

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement. It is not good because

- Pupils' progress at Key Stage 1 is too slow, particularly in reading and writing. They begin to catch up at Key Stage 2 but do not reach expected levels by the time they leave.
- At Key Stage 2, pupils struggle to solve problems in mathematics.
- Teaching does not promote good achievement because work is not always set at the right level. Progress slows where teachers' explanations are over long and pupils do not get enough chance to contribute.
- The drive for improvement is too dependent on the headteacher. Further training and support is needed to help other leaders and governors develop their ability to check and improve teaching.
- Although leaders have established methods for checking on the quality of teaching, this has had too little impact in ensuring it is consistently good over time.

The school has the following strengths

- Pupils are safe and their behaviour is good.
- Pupils are rightly proud of their achievements in sport and music.
- Children make a good start in the Nursery.
- The headteacher gives a clear lead by making raising achievement the priority. There is some good teaching. English at Key Stage 2 is improving. Consequently, the school has the capacity to improve further.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed teaching in all classes and saw 14 lessons.
- The inspectors looked at the work in pupils' books to get a view of current achievement and progress over time. The inspectors did this jointly with the headteacher. The inspectors spoke to groups of pupils to get their view of, amongst other things, how teaching helps them to learn and what they think about behaviour and safety in the school.
- The inspectors took account of 10 responses from parents to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View). They also talked to some parents at the start of the school day as they brought their children to school.
- Meetings were held with five members of the governing body, teaching and classroom support staff and a representative from the local authority.
- The inspectors looked at a number of documents, including the school's self-evaluation, safeguarding documents, 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 inspectors listened to pupils read and checked the school's records of reading progress.

Inspection team

David Law, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Nina Heron

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This is a smaller than average sized primary school.
- Most pupils are from White British backgrounds. No pupils speak English as an additional language.
- An above average proportion of pupils are supported through school action because they have a disability or special educational needs.
- An above 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 pupil premium is 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 meets 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 it is good or better by:
 - matching work more carefully to pupils' different needs, particularly so the more able are challenged and those with special educational needs get timely support
 - making sure teachers' explanations and introductions to lessons are not too lengthy and allowing pupils time to think and explain their ideas.
- Improve pupils' progress and raise achievement in reading and writing at Key Stage 1 by:
 - teaching pupils to draw on a wide range of strategies and helping them to read with greater understanding
 - making sure pupils systematically acquire key skills in handwriting, spelling and punctuation.
- Improve pupils' progress and raise achievement in mathematics at Key Stage 2 by planning lessons for pupils to apply their mathematical knowledge so they can solve problems confidently and accurately.
- Improve leadership and management by:
 - providing training and support for governors and school leaders, apart from the headteacher, to develop their skills for checking the quality of teaching and hence to secure improvements
 - carefully monitoring how well teaching is promoting good achievement in lessons and over time and acting on this information to continuously raise standards and improve teaching
 - raise governors' awareness in the use of performance data in order to oversee the management of teachers' appraisal and pay related decisions.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Most children join the Early Years Foundation Stage with knowledge, skills and understanding below those typical for their age. They make good progress overall and are now entering Year 1 at expected levels for their age, which is an improvement on the last inspection. Progress is quickest in the Nursery where children settle well to routines and enjoy what they do, for example, when they play under a red cloak at being Chinese Dragons.
- The brisk start to learning in the Early Years Foundation Stage slows at Key Stage 1. In the last three years standards of attainment by the end of Year 2 have been below those seen nationally, particularly in reading and writing, and have shown little improvement.
- At Key Stage 1, pupils use their knowledge of letters and sounds to read unfamiliar words and they did this well in a good lesson in Year 1. However, too many are not adept at drawing on a range of strategies to read fluently with understanding and even the best readers are seldom expressive. Handwriting is too often poorly formed and too many pupils find punctuation and spelling difficult. Achievement in mathematics is better and pupils often enjoy this subject although standards of attainment are still below average.
- Pupils make better progress in reading and writing at Key Stage 2, with reading showing the biggest gains as more pupils read widely and often. Progress in mathematics is not as strong and too many pupils find it difficult to solve problems and apply their knowledge. Progress is best in Years 5 and 6, but although pupils catch up well they still leave with standards that are below average overall.
- Overall, disabled pupils and those with special educational needs make the same progress as all other pupils in the school. The small number of pupils with a statement of special educational needs make good progress because they receive effective personal support.
- Pupils known to be eligible for a free school meal make better progress in mathematics than other pupils at the school although their progress in English is similar. In the last year, attainment has improved for this group and is now broadly average because pupil premium funding is used well to provide extra teaching.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- In all classes, teachers manage behaviour well. Good quality teaching is seen in a number of lessons, and it is strongest in Years 5 and 6, but across the school there is not enough to help pupils make good progress over time.
- Where teaching is strongest it promotes brisker learning. In Year 5, pupils made good progress in working out a computer program when teaching challenged them to think through their ideas. In the Nursery, children loved baking cakes because the activity was planned well to be lively and interesting. Teachers have good subject knowledge in music and sport, which underpins pupils' success in these aspects.
- Where teaching is less effective, time is not used well. Pupils spend too long listening to teachers talking, particularly during introductions to lessons, and are not drawn into thinking for themselves and explaining their ideas.
- In some lessons, learning is not set at just the right level to meet pupils' different needs and the work is either too easy or too difficult. Consequently, the more-able pupils have too little challenge and make too little progress. Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs struggle when the work is too difficult.
- Pupils at Key Stage 1 are taught about letters and sounds (phonics) but this is not always effective because too many find it difficult to use what they know when reading. The more-able pupils in Year 2 enjoy reading but although they are fluent they are seldom expressive. At Key Stage 2, achievement in reading is improving because the school has revised teaching methods

to make sure pupils are reading more widely. In Year 6, teaching makes sure pupils know their personal reading targets and what they need to improve.

- The school has agreed appropriate methods for the teaching of writing but handwriting, spelling and punctuation skills are not taught consistently well, particularly at Key Stage 1, with the result that progress is not brisk enough.
- All teachers check pupils' work regularly and marking is of good quality. The headteacher checks pupils' books to make sure marking is of good quality in all classes and that comments are helpful to pupils.
- Pupils say teachers are kind and helpful. Teachers promote pupils' social development well by making sure pupils are taught how to work and play well together.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Pupils are polite and friendly towards each other and say they feel safe in school. Parents agree that their children are kept safe. Pupils flourish in their personal development because the school fosters good relations and tackles any discrimination so everybody has an equal chance to learn. The school has a welcoming atmosphere and pupils are well cared for by all staff.
- Pupils have a good understanding of how to keep safe. School records show that bullying is rare but pupils know about different types of bullying because the school has a well planned programme to teach them about this.
- Behaviour in lessons and around the school is good. In a few lessons, when pupils sit too long listening to their teachers, they become restless and occasionally distract others. As one said, 'Our behaviour is good but we do get the odd problem.'
- Pupils are keen to take responsibility and very willing to be helpful around school. They thoroughly enjoy running the tuck shop. They are very proud to take on important jobs such as being members of the school council.
- Attendance is above average and there is little persistent absence. The school has effective methods to encourage good attendance.

The leadership and management requires improvement

- The headteacher's strong lead clearly emphasises the need to raise achievement. She has worked tirelessly and successfully to improve reading and writing at Key Stage 2 but much remains to be done at Key Stage 1.
- All teachers are keen to lead aspects of the school's work and can demonstrate some success, for example with literacy and Early Years Foundation Stage provision, but too much is still dependent on the headteacher. Other leaders have not yet acquired the range of skills needed to help them manage and improve teaching, although they are ambitious to acquire these abilities.
- The headteacher has implemented good methods for tracking pupils' progress, which is an improvement since the last inspection. Data from this is used to provide extra support for pupils to catch up, being particularly effective in improving the attainment of those who benefit from pupil premium funding.
- There are methods for checking on the quality of teaching but they have not had enough impact in promoting consistently good teaching. Evaluations of teaching drawn from lesson observations focus too much on what the teacher does and too little on how this impacts on pupils' learning.
- Further training has successfully helped teachers to improve writing at Key Stage 2.
- All teachers are set targets to improve based on their performance and the progress of pupils but this has not been fully effective because teaching and achievement still requires improvement.

- Leaders successfully promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and good relations exist between all pupils. Leaders tackle discrimination firmly and expect good behaviour, so all groups get on equally well together and there is equal opportunity to learn and develop personally.
- Leaders plan exciting opportunities for pupils to experience music and sport. There are residential visits where older pupils engage in adventurous outdoor activity. Younger ones enjoy exciting opportunities for outdoor play and provision for this has improved since the last inspection.
- Leaders and governors have worked successfully with the local authority to manage the deficit budget and they value this support as they do the visits of the local authority school adviser.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Has been successful in managing the budget to reduce the deficit whilst improving outdoor facilities for the Early Years Foundation Stage. Governors are committed to pupils' welfare and make sure that safeguarding requirements are met. They are supportive of the headteacher and value the data she provides about pupils' achievement because it has helped them to understand more about how well pupils learn. Governors are unsure how to check on the quality of teaching and use the data to manage teacher appraisal and related pay issues.

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	112409
Local authority	Cumbria
Inspection number	401263

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	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	176
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Chris Reid
Headteacher	Fiona Crellin
Date of previous school inspection	16 June 2010
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