

# Valley Primary School and Nursery

Whinlatter Road, Whitehaven, Cumbria, CA28 8DA

**Inspection dates** 23–24 April 2013

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	<b>Requires improvement</b>	<b>3</b>
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Requires improvement	3
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

- Too few pupils are making better than expected progress in English and mathematics by the time they leave school. The pace at which pupils are progressing is slower in Key Stage 2 than lower down the school.
- Pupils supported by the pupil premium do not make as much progress as others in the school.
- A good standard of behaviour has not been consistently maintained since the time of the last inspection.
- Teaching is not yet consistently good. Occasionally, the work set is too easy or too hard for pupils. Pupils sometimes lack clarity about how to improve their work and there are times when they are not challenged to deepen their learning and use their imagination more.
- There is not yet enough rigour in monitoring how well the curriculum provides opportunities for pupils to further develop and apply their numeracy and literacy skills.
- The governing body has not been effective enough in measuring the impact of new initiatives on whole-school improvement.

### The school has the following strengths

- The leadership of the acting and assistant headteachers is driving change and, as a result, the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement are beginning to improve rapidly. Staff now feel that they are working together as a team and they are deeply committed to whole-school improvement.
- Staff are dedicated to providing a caring environment which pupils and families value.
- Pupils settle well into the Early Years Foundation Stage where they make good progress in a stimulating environment.
- Pupils' moral and social development is a strength of the school.
- Leaders and managers are accurate in evaluating what they do well and what they need to do to improve the school.

## Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed 13 teachers and visited 19 lessons, one of which was a joint observation with the acting headteacher. In addition, inspectors made a number of short visits to lessons and listened to pupils reading.
- Discussions were held with school staff, groups of pupils, parents, senior teachers and subject leaders, representatives from the local authority and the members of the governing body.
- The inspectors observed the school’s work and looked at a wide range of documentation including safeguarding documents, the school’s self-evaluation and development plans, local authority reports, records of pupils’ current attainment and progress, documents relating to attendance and pupils’ behaviour, and pupils’ work in books.
- There were insufficient responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) to create a report but inspectors took account of the schools’ own parent and pupil surveys.

## Inspection team

Naomi Taylor, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

John Ellwood

Additional Inspector

Sheila Mawer

Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- Valley Primary and Nursery is larger than the average-sized primary school.
- Almost all pupils are of White British heritage.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium (additional funding provided by the government to support pupils known to be eligible for free school meals, children looked after by the local authority and the children of military personnel) is much higher than average.
- The proportion of pupils supported at school action is above the national average as is the proportion supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs.
- The Early Years Foundation Stage includes a Nursery class.
- Before- and after-school clubs are available for pupils.
- The special educational needs coordinator has received a national award in recognition of her work.
- Due to the absence of the headteacher, the deputy headteacher was appointed as acting headteacher in February 2013.
- Pupils are currently taught in mixed-ability classes across Years 1 and 2, Years 3 and 4, and Years 5 and 6.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in English and mathematics.
- A serious incident that occurred at the school since the previous education inspection is under investigation by the appropriate authorities. Ofsted does not have the power to investigate incidents of this kind. The welfare provision in the school was evaluated against the regulations that are in place and inspection judgements are based on the evidence available at the time of the inspection.

### What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching so that it is always at least good or better and to ensure pupils' progress is accelerated by:
  - ensuring that in lessons the needs of all pupils are fully met, particularly those pupils supported by the pupil premium, through a range of stimulating activities so that they reach their full potential
  - ensuring pupils have a clear understanding about what they need to do to improve their learning
  - increasing the opportunities for pupils to deepen their understanding of what they are doing, challenge ideas and use their imagination to further develop their learning.
- Improve leadership and management, including governance, by:
  - regularly checking that pupils have enough opportunities across the curriculum to apply and practise their numeracy and literacy skills, particularly in Key Stage 2
  - developing the capacity of the governing body to work effectively with the senior leadership team in order to hold the school to account for continuous improvement.

## Inspection judgements

### The achievement of pupils

### requires improvement

- Standards of attainment and the rate at which pupils make progress from their individual starting points dipped in 2012 and continue to require improvement.
- The progress made in reading, writing and mathematics by the majority of pupils in Key Stage 2 is broadly in line with national expectations but too few pupils make better than expected progress.
- Pupils who are supported by extra funding (the pupil premium) have been making less progress compared to their classmates. Test results show that there is a gap between the standards they reach and those reached by other pupils in school. In 2012 pupils eligible for free school meals attained standards two terms behind those of their peers in English and almost three terms behind in mathematics. This is starting to be addressed and the extra money is now being spent more wisely on providing small-group tuition and one-to-one work which is sharply focused on raising standards and demonstrating the school's commitment to equality of opportunity.
- Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs make similar progress to other pupils due to timely and sharply focused help from teachers and teaching assistants. The school works effectively with external agencies to support pupils and their families.
- In the Early Years Foundation Stage there are very effective links between school and home which help the children to settle quickly. Almost all children start school with skills that are well below those typically expected for their age, particularly in their speech and personal development.
- From their very low starting points pupils make good progress across the Early Years Foundation Stage and develop positive attitudes to learning. This continues throughout Key Stage 1 and, whilst skills in reading, writing and mathematics are below those expected nationally at the end of Year 2, much progress has been made and the improving picture across these key stages continues.
- Pupils who read to the inspectors demonstrated how they work out unfamiliar words by linking letters and sounds. They were able to retell parts of stories in their own words, demonstrating that they understood what they were reading.
- Skills in mental mathematics and problem solving prepare pupils adequately for the next stage in their education.

### The quality of teaching

### requires improvement

- Although teaching is improving, it is not consistently good enough over time to ensure that pupils make consistently good progress.
- Where weaknesses remain, the work set is too easy for some pupils or too hard for others and this slows their pace of learning. For example, in a Key Stage 2 mathematics lesson all pupils spent too long working on the same tasks. The more able pupils finished the work quickly and then had to wait for the others to finish before they were given the next task. This failed to develop the depth and understanding of their work and did not challenge them to use their imagination.
- In an English class, where the more able were working independently in small groups with occasional teacher support and the less able were working with a teaching assistant, good progress was being made. However, a middle-ability group who were working on their own, completing sentences and then putting them in order of events were finding this work too difficult and did not make enough progress.
- Examples of good teaching were seen in phonics (letters and the sounds they make) sessions. Here the pace of learning is brisk and the pupils are given a wide range of activities appropriate to their abilities. Little time is wasted as pupils are moved from task to task, and pupils are motivated to learn and keen to share their work on writing sentences, in these lessons good

progress is made by all pupils.

- In the Early Years Foundation Stage children are encouraged to learn through play. 'My time in Nursery' diaries and children's journals of their work in the Reception class provide good photographic evidence, and teachers' comments, of the range of activities that the children are engaged in. This helps parents to understand how their children are learning and promotes ways in which they can support their children's learning at home.
- Although pupils have targets, these are not updated regularly enough. Work in books is regularly marked but, occasionally, teachers do not always explain how pupils can improve their work.
- Teaching assistants are effectively deployed and provide a valuable resource to support pupils who need extra help from time to time. The Rainbow Room and other intervention work ensure that pupils with disabilities and special educational needs make similar progress to other pupils. Until recently the pupil premium was not being used effectively enough to close the gap between those known to be eligible for free school meals and other pupils in school.

### The behaviour and safety of pupils

### requires improvement

- School records indicate that standards of behaviour have not always been as strong as those seen during the inspection. There was a period of time when there was lack of clarity about acceptable and unacceptable behaviour.
- Since his appointment the acting headteacher has taken swift action. A zone system has been rejuvenated and pupils now have very clear boundaries resulting in rewards for good behaviour and sanctions when behaviour is not as it should be. As a result, pupils behave well in and around the school. They have positive attitudes to learning and generally find lessons interesting.
- From an early age pupils learn how to show respect for each other and the adults around them. Pupils say they feel safe in school and they learn how to stay safe in their own community and other environments. This view is shared by parents and staff. Pupils are aware of different forms of bullying but not all pupils have a good enough understanding of how to stay safe when working on computers. Bullying is rare but there are systems in place to effectively manage such incidents.
- The school council is proactive in raising money for local, national and international charities. However, it does not yet have an input in developing the curriculum, such as the provision of more after-school clubs. Parent surveys undertaken by the school clearly demonstrate that they are happy with the school, but their suggestions for more after-school opportunities and clubs for their children in holiday times are yet to be realised by the school.
- Attendance has improved to average and continues to improve. This is due to the work of all staff and, particularly, the education support worker, who works tirelessly with families to ensure pupils attend regularly.
- Pupils' moral and social development is a real strength of the school. They clearly understand right from wrong and are encouraged to make appropriate decisions. In one particular lesson pupils were praised by the teacher for their improvement in behaviour but were encouraged to think about what they could do to improve behaviour further. Pupils thoughtfully raised points about how they should make their own decisions and not be swayed by others into avenues that could lead them astray.

### The leadership and management

### requires improvement

- Since the previous inspection there has been a period of turbulence when the staff have not had ownership of whole-school reorganisation. Responsibilities of staff were changed and lacked clarity. However, since leaders and managers have recently returned to their areas of responsibility there has been rapid improvement again.
- The governing body was, until relatively recently, too dependent on information presented to it about how the school is performing compared to others nationally. Procedures to check on the

impact of the school's work have not been consistently effective in driving improvement. Currently, the school has an accurate picture of its strengths and areas to be developed, but this has not always been the case.

- The local authority is supporting the school well during the headteacher's absence. The acting headteacher and assistant headteacher are working well together to drive school improvement. They have reimplemented procedures within performance management to ensure that staff are given challenging targets to accelerate pupils' progress, and this is now linked directly to the quality of teaching and teachers' pay. Training opportunities are beginning to be provided to help teachers to improve the quality of their teaching. However, these systems have not yet been in place long enough to fully address the weaknesses in teaching or to ensure that all pupils make consistently good progress.
- Safeguarding procedures are in place and the school is currently in the process of reviewing systems and policies by commissioning an external review. There are effective links to professional agencies beyond school which effectively support pupils' personal development and their learning.
- There are some inconsistencies across year groups in the number of opportunities pupils have to find out things for themselves and apply their literacy and numeracy skills. In response to this the curriculum is beginning to be reviewed to ensure that pupils are motivated and inspired by what they are learning.
- The school website is under construction and currently does not contain information that is required about, for example, the results of recent tests.
- **The governance of the school:**
  - The governing body is committed to continually driving improvements at this school. Governors ensure that the school fulfils its statutory responsibilities; all staff have been vetted and trained appropriately to keep pupils safe. They now have an accurate overview of overall provision. The governing body is beginning to work more closely with the senior leadership team but this is in its infancy. Governors now challenge staff on pupils' progress and have a secure understanding of data. This level of enquiry and accountability contributes to shaping the short- and long-term plans for the school based on how well pupils are progressing compared to other schools. Governors are now more aware of the quality of teaching, which is linked to teachers' pay based on meeting targets. They are checking that staff make effective use of pupil premium funding to ensure that all pupils are helped to make progress, no matter what their attainment when they start at Valley Primary School and Nursery.

## 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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	134214
<b>Local authority</b>	Cumbria
<b>Inspection number</b>	412838

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	281
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Beth Dawson
<b>Acting Headteacher</b>	Nigel Shipton-Smith
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	6 May 2009
<b>Telephone number</b>	01946 694152
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