

Blennerhasset School

Blennerhasset, Wigton, Cumbria, CA7 3RL

Inspection dates

5–6 December 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	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 achieve well. All groups of pupils make good progress in English and mathematics.
- Pupils develop good reading and writing skills. They greatly enjoy reading and are keen to talk about their choice of books.
- Teaching is good. Lessons are well structured so that pupils understand what they have to do. Good relationships in the classroom result in a positive atmosphere throughout the whole school.
- An improved marking system is used well to show pupils how to improve their work.
- The rich curriculum provides a varied and interesting range of learning experiences which meet the needs of all pupils. The many exciting clubs and activities capture pupils' imagination and enthusiasm.
- Behaviour is good; pupils are keen to attend school, which is why attendance is above average. Pupils have good attitudes to their learning and help one another to do their best.
- Pupils say they feel safe. They have a good understanding of how to keep themselves and others safe.
- The school is led by a highly respected and caring headteacher. Members of staff work well together in order to create an effective team that is bringing about improvements.
- The headteacher and governors keep a close eye on how pupils are doing and take action to stop them falling behind. Governors play a full and important role in helping the school to improve.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Pupils do not get enough opportunities to develop their mathematical skills in a wide range of subjects.
- Some pupils can lose concentration during lessons when the pace of learning falters.
- During lessons, occasionally, there are missed opportunities for teachers to give pupils extra challenge and teachers' expectations of what the higher-attaining pupils can achieve are not always aspirational enough.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed three teachers and two teaching assistants and visited nine lessons.
- Discussions were held with the headteacher, English and mathematics subject leaders, the special educational needs coordinators, pupils, members of the governing body and a representative of the local authority.
- The inspector scrutinised pupils' work and listened to pupils read.
- A range of the school's documentation was examined, including the school's analysis of how well it is doing, documents relating to monitoring and evaluation, systems for tracking children's progress, documents regarding safeguarding and key policies.
- The inspector took account of responses of the school's most recent questionnaire for parents and 22 responses from the on-line questionnaire (Parent View).
- The inspector analysed six questionnaires completed by staff.

Inspection team

Sue Sharkey, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Blennerhasset School is considerably smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- Almost all pupils are of White British heritage. Very few pupils are from minority ethnic backgrounds.
- The proportion of pupils supported through school action is above the national average. The proportion of pupils supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is also above average.
- The proportion of pupils supported by the pupil premium is well below the national average. The pupil premium is additional government funding provided for children in local authority care, for children from armed service families, and for children known to be eligible for free school meals.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for attainment and progress in English and mathematics.
- The headteacher and Key Stage 2 teacher joined the school in September 2012.
- Pupils are taught in three mixed-age classes: Nursery with Reception, Year 1 with Year 2 and Years 3, 4, 5 with Year 6. The number in each year group can be less than two.
- The school has achieved the Eco-School Bronze award and is part of the Children's University.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching to outstanding and raise achievement in all year groups by:
 - increasing the pace throughout lessons so that pupils are fully engaged all the time
 - ensuring that the skills pupils learn in mathematics lessons are regularly developed in other subjects through practical, real-life and problem-solving activities
 - making sure that teachers consistently have high expectations of what the higher-attaining pupils in Key Stages 1 and 2 can achieve
 - ensuring that teachers check the progress of all pupils during lessons, providing further challenge if needed.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- When children join the Early Years Foundation Stage, their individual skills vary considerably but overall, they are below what is typical for their age particularly in social and emotional skills, speaking and listening. Children benefit from good-quality provision both in the classroom and outdoors. They are encouraged to think independently while still having opportunities for teacher-led learning. Through good teaching aimed precisely at their individual needs, children make good progress.
- Good progress continues through Key Stages 1 and 2 for all groups of pupils. Pupils do less well in mathematics than they do in reading and writing. They do not have sufficient opportunities to develop regularly the skills they learn in mathematics lessons through real-life and problem-solving activities in other subjects. Consequently, these skills are less well developed than their reading and writing skills.
- The school is committed to ensuring that all pupils have equal opportunities to succeed. Effective use of the pupil premium funding has enabled those eligible to benefit from academic and pastoral support either individually or in groups, and the school has recently developed a cosy and welcoming area to provide nurture support. Throughout the school, pupils supported through the pupil premium funding make good progress, reaching standards similar to those of other pupils. Numbers are too small to make comparisons with national averages.
- Staff use information well and meticulously check pupils' individual progress half-termly. Extra support is given for those who are performing below what is expected for their target. This can cover learning, social or emotional needs. It is carried out by teachers and skilled teaching assistants who play a key role in helping pupils do their best.
- The progress of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs is good because teachers match work closely to their needs.
- The numbers of pupils in each year group can be very small. As a result, attainment can vary considerably from year to year. In the unvalidated 2013 national tests for Year 6, reading and writing were above average whereas mathematics was below, which is not the case each year.
- Over the last two years, all pupils have made expected progress in reading and writing; in 2013, the proportion of pupils making good or outstanding progress in these areas was above average. The proportion of pupils achieving the higher level 5 in English over the last two years has been above average. Mathematics has varied over time but the school's monitoring shows that current Year 6 pupils are on track to do even better in English and especially mathematics. This is confirmed by lesson observations, scrutiny of work and hearing pupils read.
- Pupils enjoy reading and discussing their books. As they progress through school, they begin to appreciate favourite authors. Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage are keen to share a book with an adult. They already have favourite stories and are able to recognise patterns in sentences and laugh at humour. Pupils use phonics (linking letters and the sounds they make) well to tackle unfamiliar words and older pupils make good use of punctuation to help them read with expression. As a result, pupils' progress in reading is strong.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching is consistently good. All parents who responded to Parent View agree that their children are taught well. The school's accurate monitoring over time shows that teaching is typically good and improving.
- The learning environment throughout the school is stimulating and celebrates pupils' learning. Good attention has been paid to ensuring that pupils learn through a variety of many different methods. Information and communication technology is used well throughout lessons, with pupils regularly using iPads to seek information and explore their reading and writing skills.

- Teachers plan carefully for mixed-age classes to ensure that pupils of different ages and abilities are well catered for. There are occasions, however, when teachers do not have high enough expectations of the standards pupils attaining the higher levels in Key Stages 1 and 2 could reach.
- Teachers and teaching assistants work together well. Lessons and small-group teaching for pupils who need extra help are planned and organised well.
- In lessons, pupils are generally keen to learn and take pride in having responsibility for their own learning. Pupils say they enjoy writing and their books show that they have many opportunities to explore different styles of writing.
- During a Key Stage 2 lesson, pupils concentrated as they wrote a newspaper article. They remained focused using information gathered from previous lessons. The teacher challenged pupils, reminding them to use appropriate vocabulary to extend and enrich their sentences. However, occasionally teachers do not check pupils' progress often enough during lessons and so do not give extra challenge when it would be appropriate.
- Pupils' social skills are developed well, which enables them to be fully engaged in learning activities. There are, however, a few occasions when the pace of lessons dips and pupils lose concentration, so they are not fully engaged throughout the whole lesson.
- The school has had a focus on raising the effectiveness of marking pupils' work. There is now an agreed approach to the marking of books in Key Stages 1 and 2. Pupils comment favourably on how this is helping them to improve their work.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Pupils' behaviour is good during lessons, around school and in the playground. Parents who responded to Parent View agree their children are well behaved. Around the school, pupils are very polite and show consideration for the needs of others.
- Relationships between pupils and staff are extremely positive, making a significant contribution to the community and family atmosphere of the school. Pupils have positive attitudes to learning and enjoy coming to school, which is reflected in their above-average attendance.
- Pupils rightly say that they are safe in school. They use the internet and are taught well how to do so safely. Bullying is rare but pupils are confident that should it happen, or if they have any problems, they can talk readily to any adult in school who will help them.
- Pupils are keen to take on responsibilities. Pupils on the school council are delighted that they have recently asked the school to purchase football nets and the school was happy to agree. They talk proudly of the various local, national and internationally charities for which pupils have raised funds.
- The Enterprise group has recently been formed as part of the school's drive to improve mathematics. Pupils are pleased that they have been able to secure a market stall to sell Christmas decorations they have made.

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher leads the school well and has communicated successfully her commitment and drive for excellence to all staff, governors and parents. This is shown in the overwhelming support that was evident in staff questionnaire returns as well as Parent View.
- The school has an accurate view of its own strengths and weaknesses and links this successfully to development planning. Plans for school improvement cover the right priorities and build on good opportunities for checking progress.
- Much of the school's improvements are as a direct result of the headteacher's skills in the organisation and development of the quality of teaching. As well as having a class teaching

commitment, she monitors regularly in order to improve teaching and pupils' progress continually. Effective procedures to manage teachers' performance linked to decisions about salary and ongoing training have helped to improve teaching.

- Equality of opportunity is well promoted and any discrimination is tackled robustly. The school uses its pupil premium funding effectively to support eligible pupils and provides additional support for any pupils who need it, ensuring that all groups of pupils make good progress.
- The local authority knows the school well and has supported the headteacher during her first year at the school. This support is now continuing with a 'light-touch' approach, which is appropriate because the school has shown that it has a good capacity for sustained improvement.
- The rich curriculum provides many opportunities for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The headteacher has invited members of the community into the school to share their skills, which has extended pupils' knowledge and understanding. Staff and governors are also willing to lead groups and clubs after school. For example, pupils can watch the stars in the early evening astronomy club or enjoy the team spirit of singing in the choir with their friends.
- The school is pleased that through use of the additional sports funding, many pupils have opportunities to travel to other schools to play team games such as hockey and football and take part in orienteering events.
- The school has extremely positive links with parents and the community and works effectively with external agencies.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors know the school extremely well. They visit the school regularly, for example by spending time in classes and talking with teachers to extend their knowledge of what good teaching looks like. Governors have a good knowledge of the school's performance data and how these compare with other schools. The governing body has effective systems to review the performance of staff, including the headteacher's, and determine levels of pay. It ensures that the school's arrangements for safeguarding meet requirements. Governors ensure effective budget management, for example by checking that the pupil premium funding makes a difference to pupils.

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	112104
Local authority	Cumbria
Inspection number	428905

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	53
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Haydn Davis
Headteacher	Jillian Harrison-Longworth
Date of previous school inspection	10 July 2009
Telephone number	01697 320677
Fax number	01697 320677
Email address	office@blennerhasset.cumbria.sch.uk

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