

Aspatria Richmond Hill School

Aspatria, Wigton, Cumbria, CA7 3BQ

Inspection dates 14–15 January 2014

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		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

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

- Achievement requires improvement. Too many pupils currently in the school are not reaching the standards of attainment expected for their age. This is because teaching over time has been affected by many staff changes. As a result, progress in some classes has slowed down.
- Boys' achievement in writing is weaker than girls'. Most able pupils are not always reaching their full potential. The gap between disadvantaged pupils and others is not closing quickly enough.
- Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage are not encouraged to develop their mathematical understanding often enough when they are playing and exploring.
- Teaching requires improvement because, over time, there have been too many changes of staff that have held back pupils' progress.
- Not enough teaching is outstanding. In some lessons, the most able pupils are not tackling hard enough work. Sometimes, pupils do not get the chance to complete a really good piece of work before they are asked to take on another task.
- In some classes in Key Stage 2, pupils do not practise and improve their writing often enough. Written tasks are not hard enough for some pupils, especially for most able pupils.
- Senior leaders are not giving the governing body enough information often enough on how pupils currently in the school are making progress.

The school has the following strengths

- The headteacher, well supported by governors and senior leaders, has reduced the changes in staffing, and is improving the quality of teaching. Inspectors saw good teaching in lessons. Pupils' progress has started to accelerate.
- The headteacher has galvanised staff into an energetic team. Their enthusiasm is contagious so that pupils are keen to do well and enjoy school activities.
- In 2013, the end of Key Stage 2 national test results were better than at the time of the previous inspection. Most pupils made good progress from their different starting points, especially in mathematics.
- Pupils behave well in school and enjoy learning. Pupils feel safe and are cared for very well. 'School is awesome' is a comment typical of many pupils' views.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 17 part-lessons. Two of these were carried out jointly with senior leaders. Inspectors analysed pupils' work in their books and listened to children from Years 2, 5 and 6 reading.
- Discussions were held with staff, pupils, governors and two representatives of the local authority.
- Documents looked at included the self-evaluation summary, improvement plans, information on pupils' progress, records of pupils' behaviour and attendance, documents relating to safeguarding and local authority reports on the school's performance.
- Parents' views were taken into account through the 18 responses to the Ofsted on-line questionnaire (Parent View). Inspectors held conversations with parents as they collected their children from school in the afternoon. An inspector held a one-to-one conversation with a parent, at their request.

Inspection team

Gillian Salter-Smith, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Paul Edmondson

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is an average-sized primary school.
- The proportion of pupils supported by the pupil premium is above average. The pupil premium is additional funding for those pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals, children from service families and those children who are looked after by the local authority.
- Almost all pupils are of White British heritage.
- An above average proportion of pupils is supported through school action. The proportion supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is below average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards that set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- The school has undergone a period of significant period of turbulence in leadership and staffing. An acting headteacher was leading the school at the time of the last inspection. An executive headteacher supported the school prior to the appointment of the current headteacher. The current headteacher was appointed from April 2012. There have been many changes in staffing since the previous inspection.
- The school is supported by a national leader of education from Dearham Primary School and by a local leader of education from Silloth Primary School

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching further so that over time it leads to pupils' good achievement, especially in boys' writing, for disadvantaged pupils and for those who are most able by:
 - making sure that pupils have plenty of practise in writing longer pieces of work both in literacy lessons and when working in other subjects, especially in Years 4 and 5
 - teachers keeping a close eye on when pupils need more time to get to grips with a task rather than moving them on to a new one
 - teachers checking that all pupils, including the most able pupils, have work that is hard enough and that makes them really think and work things out for themselves
 - giving children in the Early Years Foundation Stage more chances to develop their mathematical skills when they are playing and exploring both indoors and outdoors.
- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management further by:
 - senior leaders providing the governing body with detailed information more often on how well the pupils currently in the school are making progress
 - identifying more precisely how effective the use of pupil premium has been in improving the achievement of those pupils eligible for the funding.

An external review of the school's use of pupil premium should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and governance may be improved.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils requires improvement

- Pupils' achievement requires improvement. The attainment and progress of pupils currently in school varies too much from class to class because too many changes of teachers over time have slowed their progress. However, learning and progress observed in classrooms during the inspection was at least good so that pupils are starting to catch up.
- The most recent end of Key Stage 2 national test results in 2013 were an improvement on those achieved at the time of the previous inspection; attainment was broadly average. Achievement was strongest in mathematics and not as strong in writing. In 2013, attainment at the end of Key Stage 1 was broadly average in reading, writing and mathematics. Attainment was strongest in reading and weaker in writing.
- Among pupils currently in school, boys in all year groups are behind where they should be in their writing, whereas girls are achieving well. Most-able pupils are not always reaching the higher levels of attainment, especially in writing. The gaps between disadvantaged pupils and others are still evident and not closing convincingly particularly in Year 6 and Year 3.
- Many children start school in the Early Years Foundation Stage with development that is below that expected for their age. They make good progress in developing early skills in reading and writing. With adult encouragement, children are forever using their understanding of letters and sounds to decode words they come across as they play and explore. In 2013, children's development in literacy was better than the national average, but development in mathematics was below average. Where children work with adults they make good progress in improving their mathematical skills. However, there are not enough chances for children to develop their mathematical skills whilst they are playing and exploring on their own.
- Pupils enjoy reading and those who fall behind are well supported and they read to adults every day. Teachers choose exciting books and poems and use them to improve writing and capture the interest of pupils, especially boys. In a Year 2 lesson, pupils thoroughly enjoyed using their imaginations when they 'jumped into the book' and imagined what it felt like to be in the Antarctic. As a result, pupils shared a good range of interesting vocabulary, which they then used in their writing. Year 1 pupils, and a few from Year 2, reached average levels in the 2013 national phonics test for learning letters and the sounds they make.
- Pupils' progress in writing is improving but it varies between year groups. Workbooks in Years 4 and 5 show that pupils do not have enough chances to practise their writing. However, teachers are increasingly using exciting books and texts well to encourage pupils, including boys, to discuss and plan their ideas before they write. Year 5 pupils thoroughly explored the feeling of the characters in their re-enactment of the events in the poem 'The Highwayman', helping them to prepare for their writing.
- The pupil premium funding is providing extra adult support for pupils who fall behind in their work. However, pupils known to be eligible for free school meals are not always successful in catching up to others. In 2013, their attainment was around two terms behind other pupils in the school in writing and mathematics. In reading, they were three terms behind. Their progress in all three subjects was similar to other pupils. Among current pupils, the gaps in progress and attainment are widest in Year 6 and Year 3. In Year 4, they are ahead of other pupils. The small number of looked after children currently in the school are achieving well. An external review of how pupil premium funding is used is recommended.
- Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs make similar progress to other pupils. They are catching up on former slower progress because their needs are recognised quickly and class teachers and teaching assistants give them good extra support especially in reading and writing.
- A strong commitment to equality of opportunity is evident in the close attention the school pays to checking the progress of every pupil and providing extra support for pupils who fall behind.

The quality of teaching requires improvement

- The quality of teaching requires improvement because over time there have been many changes in staffing that have led to learning and progress slowing down for pupils currently in the school. Leaders have stabilised staffing and there is now better continuity in teaching and learning. Good teaching was observed in lessons and it was outstanding in one. This is helping pupils to improve their progress and catch up.
- In a few lessons, pupils do not always have long enough to finish a quality piece of work because teachers move them on to a new activity before they have got to grips with what they are doing.
- Occasionally, the work is not hard enough for the most able pupils and they do not learn enough or work things out for themselves. Sometimes, pupils are only required to write single words or short phrases and are not challenged to write in full sentences or longer pieces of writing often enough. This was evident in some pupils' workbooks in Years 4 and 5. In other years, most-able pupils tackle challenging tasks that get the most out of them.
- Teachers know their pupils very well and have very supportive relationships with pupils. They make sure that the pupils are happy, feel secure and are ready to learn. Pupils like their teachers very much and say they make lessons good fun and are always helpful.
- Teachers continually check on how well the pupils are doing so that they can give pupils work that helps them to make good progress and build on their previous successes. This was evident in a Year 6 literacy lesson, when the teacher and the teaching assistant questioned pupils often to check on their understanding and then asked further questions to challenge them to find even more interesting words and phrases. The most able pupils tackled harder tasks and used a thesaurus to broaden their vocabulary.
- Pupils are learning well in mathematics because teachers use plenty of practical demonstrations and continually challenge pupils to explain their thinking. In Year 1, pupils secured their understanding through practically sharing out 'cakes' amongst themselves to work out how many more were needed for the total coming to a party. Their understanding of addition was reinforced further when they carried out similar problems using a number line. This ensured they understood the concept of addition and were not merely carrying out addition tasks mechanically.
- Pupils are enjoying learning to write because teachers are finding exciting things to write about and they plan the learning carefully so that pupils can build up their skills. In a Year 2 literacy lesson, the teacher continually reminded the class and individuals about punctuation and spelling, so that they paid attention to these as they wrote.
- Early reading skills are taught well. Pupils develop a love of reading because they are encouraged to read exciting and challenging books and poems as a class and as individuals. Skilled staff help pupils who fall behind in their reading to catch up.
- Pupils made outstanding progress in one lesson when they worked independently and they found the topic really exciting. Year 1 pupils worked diligently to find out facts about penguins. The learning was very well organised and staff continually challenged the pupils and developed their literacy and numeracy skills.
- Pupils know what they have to do to improve because teachers mark their work regularly and give them useful guidance. Pupils reflect on how well they have done and recognise where they can improve.
- Skilled teaching assistants know pupils well and work alongside them in class giving extra help when it is needed and encouraging pupils to work things out for themselves.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Pupils enjoy being in school and learning. They like being with their friends at lunchtimes and break times. Pupils are sociable and chatty in the dining area. They are respectful to the adults who are looking after them. Pupils enjoy playtimes and share

equipment and spaces sensibly.

- The headteacher, supported by leaders and governors, has established the school as a happy and welcoming place. Pupils say that, 'the headteacher knows us all and she talks to everyone.' Pupils understand and respect the very clear guidelines for behaviour. A Year 4 pupil, without being asked, set out all the 'rules' they have to keep to during a conversation with an inspector over lunch. Staff praise pupils for their efforts and success often so that they develop positive self-esteem. Pupils enjoy and value the rewards for their work.
- Pupils sing with gusto in assemblies and thoroughly enjoy the good humour of the headteacher and the music teacher when they lead the singing.
- Pupils know about different ways that children can be bullied. They know what to do about it should it happen. They say that it does not happen very often and if it does, adults help to sort it out quickly.
- In lessons, pupils settle down quickly to tasks and are keen to do well. They work well with other pupils and enjoy talking to each other to think things through sensibly. They take care with their written tasks and take a pride in their work. Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage are happy and secure. They enjoy playing and exploring and concentrate well on their chosen activities.
- Attendance is broadly average but the attendance of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is lower than that of others. After a significant drop following a spell of sickness, attendance has improved.
- The number of pupils excluded from the school has reduced significantly since the previous inspection.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Pupils know how to keep themselves safe. Checks on staff and governors are rigorous. The school is a safe environment.

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher, well supported by leaders and governors, has tackled and continues to tackle areas in need of improvement determinedly and effectively. She has successfully led improvements in pupils' behaviour and the quality of teaching so that pupils are now making good progress in lessons and starting to catch up where they have fallen behind.
- The headteacher is accurate in evaluating the performance of the school and has involved staff and governors in the process so that all are clear about the school's priorities.
- The headteacher has worked well with governors to bring greater stability to staffing and better continuity in teaching.
- New systems to manage pupils' behaviour and encourage good behaviour are working well.
- Pupils' progress is checked closely by all leaders, including subject leaders. Where pupils start to fall behind, class teachers are held responsible for making sure that the pupils get the right extra support to help them catch up. Subject leaders support class teachers well in helping to provide the best support.
- Staff training is linked closely to the school's priorities and supports individual staff needs. Staff performance is managed well so that pay awards are allocated fairly and in response to effective work.
- The headteacher has sought useful support from other local schools and the local authority. A national leader of education and a local leader of education have supported improvements to leadership and teaching. As a result, staff confidence has increased enormously so they are now confident in sharing approaches that work really well with each other and with other schools.
- The local authority has given helpful support to the school, checking on its progress closely. Training initiated by governors, and well supported by the local authority, has improved the effectiveness of governors. The local authority has supported training in key priorities such as improving boys' writing. As a result, teachers are selecting activities, books and tasks that interest and excite pupils, especially boys.

- The curriculum has improved so that it is meeting most pupils' needs well. Reading, writing and mathematics are well planned. Increasingly, exciting topics that interest the pupils are used to give them extra practise in the key skills. The curriculum encourages pupils' good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Visits to cities broaden pupils' horizons. Pupils take their responsibilities seriously and enjoy being 'ambassadors' for the school. They develop into confident and responsible young people.
- The Primary School Sport funding has been used well to provide additional competitive sport and outdoor activities for pupils across the school. Training for staff in teaching gymnastics is increasing their confidence. The numbers of pupils regularly involved in physical activity and being well taught in physical education lessons has increased.
- The school has done a great deal to reach out to parents and help them to support their children's learning through a good range of workshops and family learning activities when parents and pupils learn together with staff. This has been most successful for the parents of the younger children. The school is aware of the need to continue to work with more parents, especially those of older pupils.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors are equally determined to improve the school as the headteacher. Governors are fully involved in deciding the school's strengths and priorities for improvement. They are aware of how well staff are performing across the school and support the decisions made with regard to pay awards. They set challenging relevant targets for the headteacher; the early targets included improving behaviour and attitudes to learning quickly. Governors have undertaken a review of their own roles and performance. The governing body is receiving training from the local authority that is helping governors to ask more searching questions of the school's leaders. As a result, they held an extraordinary meeting with the leaders to review the school's performance even more closely very recently. They understand how well pupils have performed in national tests. They have less information from senior leaders on how well the pupils currently in the school are making progress. It is, therefore, more difficult for governors to know whether these children will reach their full potential or to ask questions about their progress. Governors know how the pupil premium is spent but there has not been a close enough analysis of whether the actions taken are making enough difference to pupils. An external review of the impact of pupil premium funding is recommended. Governors are successfully reducing a financial deficit.

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	112127
Local authority	Cumbria
Inspection number	426127

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	201
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Henry Barker
Headteacher	Helen Ford
Date of previous school inspection	28 November 2011
Telephone number	01697 320650
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