

Blackford CofE Primary School

Blackford, Carlisle, Cumbria, CA6 4ES

Inspection dates

1 May 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Requires improvement	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.

- Significant improvements have been made in pupils' achievement and the quality of teaching since the last inspection. This is as a result of determined leadership by the headteacher supported by leaders throughout the school.
- Pupils' achievement is now good. From their often below average starting points, pupils in Year 6 reach standards that are above average in reading and mathematics and average in writing.
- Teaching is typically good and some is outstanding. Interesting lessons fill the pupils with enthusiasm and make them want to learn.
- Behaviour is good. Pupils feel very safe and understand how to keep themselves safe. They are unfailingly polite and courteous and appreciate the caring environment created by the school.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is strong and is promoted well through a range of activities.
- The governors are very supportive and share the same determination as the headteacher and her staff to continue to improve the school further.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- The teaching of writing is not as strong as that of reading and mathematics because the marking of writing in other subjects is not of the same high standard as it is in English.
- Pupils do not have enough opportunities to write for a wide range of audiences and purposes.
- Opportunities are few for teaching staff to improve their own practice by observing the very best teaching in the school and elsewhere.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching and learning in 6 lessons, one of which was observed jointly with the headteacher. Inspectors also listened to pupils read in Years 1 and 2 and Year 6.
- Inspectors took account of 12 responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) and 7 questionnaires completed by the staff.
- Inspectors held a meeting with pupils from Years 3 to 6 to seek their views of the school and talked informally with other pupils at lunch times and break times. Inspectors also talked to the Chair of the Governing Body and a representative of the local authority. They also held discussions with leaders who have other responsibilities, including the special educational needs coordinator and the leader of the Early Years Foundation Stage.
- Inspectors observed the school at work and looked at a range of documentation, including internal and external information relating to pupils' progress, pupils' workbooks, school improvement planning and the school's procedures for gaining an accurate view of its own performance. They also considered reports written by the local authority, documents relating to teachers' performance, minutes of governing body meetings and safeguarding and child protection documents.

Inspection team

Peter Eeva, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Derek Sleightholme

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This is a much smaller than average-sized primary school.
- The proportion of pupils supported through school action is above average.
- The proportion of pupils supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is average.
- The proportion of pupils supported by the pupil premium is average. (The pupil premium is additional funding for those pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals and those children who are looked after by the local authority.)
- The number of pupils in each year group is much lower than average and pupils are taught in mixed-age classes.
- In recent years there have been a significant number of pupils who have joined or left the school other than at the usual time.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards which are the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in English and mathematics by the end of Year 6.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the quality of teaching to outstanding in order to raise standards further, especially in writing, by:
 - ensuring that staff's expectations of pupils' accuracy of spelling, punctuation and grammar are always as high in all subjects as they are in English
 - giving pupils opportunities to write for a wide range of different audiences and purposes
 - making sure that teaching staff have opportunities to improve their own practice by learning from colleagues in school as well as others elsewhere.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- The very small numbers of pupils in each year group means that each pupil has a disproportionate effect on the overall percentage of results in national tests. The movement of pupils into and out of the school and their variable starting points makes comparisons between different years difficult and this tends to mask the real picture of pupils' good achievement from their different starting points.
- Children start in the Reception class with skills and abilities that are below those typical for children of their age. They get off to a good start and achieve well in the Early Years Foundation Stage. They quickly begin to link letters to the sounds they make and are becoming good readers for their age. By the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage many write simple sentences using correct grammar and spelling with growing confidence and are well prepared for learning in Year 1.
- In Key Stage 1 pupils continue to make good progress and standards are rising. The school's own data and pupils' work shows that pupils' standards in reading, writing and mathematics are in line with those typical for their age, showing good achievement from their starting points.
- By the end of Year 6 standards in reading and mathematics are above average and average in writing. This represents good progress from their previous lower starting points. Although progress in writing is good, it is not as good as it is in reading and mathematics. Pupils write at length and with accuracy in spelling, punctuation and grammar in English lessons, but standards are not as high in their writing in other subjects.
- Pupils' learning in lessons is good. They have very positive attitudes to learning and quickly gain the knowledge and skills they need to improve further, particularly in reading and mathematics.
- Pupils enjoy reading throughout the school. They use their phonic knowledge well (sounds and the letters they represent) to tackle new and difficult words, and as a result, pupils across the school are mostly reading above the levels typical for their age.
- In mathematics lessons pupils make good progress and are given activities and opportunities in other subjects to apply their knowledge and skills to real situations, such as calculating average pulse rates in a science lesson.
- Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs make similar progress to that of their peers and sometimes better progress. They receive well-targeted support from skilled adults who know and understand their needs very well.
- Boys and girls make similar progress and do equally well. The most-able pupils also make good progress when challenging work is set for them and some are being entered for the high Level 6 tests in reading and mathematics this year.
- Pupils known to be eligible for pupil premium funding make similar and sometimes more rapid progress than that of their peers. The funding has been used effectively to increase the amount of support for pupils through additional teaching and teaching assistant support, training for staff and the purchase of resources and specific programmes to promote pupils' skills, particularly in writing.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching is good and some is outstanding. The improved quality of teaching, particularly in the Early Years Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1, has had a positive impact on pupils' learning and achievement, enabling them to make good progress.
- Children in the Reception Year group get off to a good start and are provided with interesting indoor and outdoor activities which cover all the required areas of learning. Good attention is paid to developing children's speaking and listening skills which prepares them very well for future learning.
- Where pupils make outstanding progress, they are given a range of activities that are skilfully

planned to be hard enough for pupils of all abilities in the mixed-age classes. In a Year 3 – Year 4 class, for example, pupils eagerly responded to the challenge of writing from the point of view of a seagull in the story of the Iron Man.

- Lessons are planned which are interesting and enthuse the pupils. In the class with the youngest children, pupils confidently wrote letters to 'the Wolf' with advice about how to apologise to Little Red Riding Hood's grandmother.
- There are very good relationships between staff and pupils. Pupils cooperate well together in pairs and groups when given opportunities to learn together and the pupils appreciate these opportunities.
- Detailed knowledge of how well pupils have learned in English and mathematics is used to plan activities that are just at the right level to get the best out of pupils in the mixed-age classes. Pupils are keen to write and often do so at some length. However, the high standards of spelling, punctuation and grammar seen in pupils' English work are not present in their writing in other subjects. Much of the writing is carefully planned by staff, but pupils have limited audiences and purposes to write for.
- Pupils are encouraged to learn together. The mixed-age groups in each class allow for opportunities for pupils to learn in different ability groups to everyone's benefit, including the most able. Pupils behave very well in lessons.
- Teaching assistants are deployed very effectively and carefully guide pupils' learning. They have a clear picture of how different pupils learn, especially those who have special educational needs or disabilities.
- Pupils' workbooks are marked regularly with suggestions about how to improve. Pupils respond to these suggestions and the quality of their work improves as a result.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is outstanding.
- Procedures for keeping pupils safe are managed very efficiently and sensibly. Pupils say they feel very safe and parents agree that their children feel extremely safe in school. Pupils have an excellent understanding of how to keep themselves safe in a wide range of situations, including when using the Internet.
- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils usually behave very well in lessons and behaviour out of lessons is often of a similar high standard. Pupils come to school eager to learn; they are confident, capable young people who are keen to use every moment in school productively.
- The school has an effective system for encouraging pupils to behave well. Pupils say that they know how to behave well both in and out of lessons and that they expect others to behave equally well.
- In the playground pupils play well with each other and older pupils show care and consideration for younger pupils.
- Pupils say that there is very little, if any, bullying and that they know what to do if any should occur. They have a good understanding of the different types of bullying, including cyber-bullying.
- Attendance has improved and is now average. The school works very hard to encourage pupils to attend school regularly and on time.
- Pupils appreciate the range of activities and clubs available to them and especially enjoy the sport activities. When asked if there was anything they would like to change, pupils found it hard to suggest any significant improvements they would make. As one pupil put it, "I like it just the way it is".
- Through the curriculum, pupils develop a good understanding of different faiths and cultures and show respect and consideration for others. There is very much a family feel to this small school which was particularly evident in the dining hall where pupils happily sat at mixed-age tables

with the older pupils providing very good role models for the younger pupils. There are many opportunities for pupils to reflect on and express their feelings. This does much to promote their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, which is a strength of the school.

The leadership and management are good

- The school is very well led by a very determined and effective headteacher who is ably supported by leaders, including those at middle level and by the governing body.
- There have been improvements in both the achievement of pupils and the quality of teaching in recent years as a result of the concerted action of all the staff. However, leaders are yet to ensure that pupils' achievement in writing is as good as it is in reading and mathematics.
- The school has an accurate picture of its strengths and areas for development and produces plans with actions to address these. All staff and governors play an important part in creating these plans and checking on the progress being made.
- The headteacher carries out regular checks on the standards of teaching which provide an accurate view of its quality. Where improvements are needed, teachers are able to improve their skills through effective professional development. The links between the management of the performance of teachers and their professional development opportunities are effective and arrangements for pay and the promotion of staff are closely linked to pupils' progress.
- There are thorough systems in place to check on pupils' progress throughout the school. Where there are gaps in their knowledge or skills, the school quickly takes action to boost pupils' learning by providing extra support in or out of lessons.
- The school knows and cares for its pupils as individuals and successfully makes sure that all pupils are able to learn. As a result, all pupils have an equal opportunity to do well and there are no gaps in performance between different groups of pupils.
- The curriculum has been developed to capture pupils' imagination and to promote their involvement in their learning. It ensures that their reading, writing and mathematical skills are well developed across other subjects.
- The new primary school sport funding is motivating pupils to be more active and to take part more frequently in a range of activities, such as free running and pupils in the Early Years Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1 now have swimming lessons. In addition, the funding is being used to improve the teaching of physical education through further staff training.
- Safeguarding and child-protection procedures are very effective and meet all current statutory requirements.
- The local authority has provided valued support which is appreciated by the school.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body is effective and governors are determined to help the school improve further. They have a good knowledge of the school and keep themselves well informed about all aspects of school life, in particular about the achievement of pupils and the quality of teaching. They monitor the school's performance and ask challenging questions to promote further development. Governors bring a range of skills which they use to good effect in carrying out their roles. Where there are gaps in their knowledge and skills they make sure that they receive appropriate training. Governors are familiar with Teachers' Standards and use them to help manage teachers' performance and award pay increases for good teaching. They oversee the spending of pupil premium funding and are aware of the positive impact this is having on pupils' achievement. They are also involved in planning the spending of the primary school sport funding and are considering how its impact on the physical well-being of pupils will be judged.

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	112300
Local authority	Cumbria
Inspection number	442382

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	52
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Dorothea MacKay
Headteacher	Linda Smith
Date of previous school inspection	15 January 2013
Telephone number	01228 674614
Fax number	01228 674614
Email address	admin@blackford.cumbria.sch.uk

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'raising concerns and making complaints about Ofsted', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk. If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.



You can use Parent View to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school. Ofsted will use the information parents and carers provide when deciding which schools to inspect and when and as part of the inspection.

You can also use Parent View to find out what other parents and carers think about schools in England. You can visit www.parentview.ofsted.gov.uk, or look for the link on the main Ofsted website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, work-based learning and skills training, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may copy all or parts of this document for non-commercial educational purposes, as long as you give details of the source and date of publication and do not alter the information in any way.

To receive regular email alerts about new publications, including survey reports and school inspection reports, please visit our website and go to 'Subscribe'.

[Piccadilly Gate](#)
[Store St](#)
[Manchester](#)
[M1 2WD](#)

T: 0300 123 4234
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.ofsted.gov.uk

© Crown copyright 2014

