

Bewcastle School

Bewcastle, Carlisle, Cumbria, CA6 6PF

Inspection dates

13 May 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Requires improvement	3
	This inspection:	Requires improvement	3
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
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

- The progress of all pupils across the school is not checked well enough. As a result, pupils' achievement is not yet accelerating to outstanding.
- Members of the governing body are at an early stage in gaining the necessary skills to be able to fully challenge the work of the school to help it to improve at a faster rate. The school's website does not include the information it should to keep parents well informed of various policies and procedures.
- Some subject leaders do not have sufficient impact on improving teaching and achievement in their subjects across the school.
- Systems to improve pupils' attendance are not yet fully developed and so some pupils' attendance remains too low.
- Sometimes, pupils are not given enough time to respond to teachers' written comments and learn from their mistakes.
- There are not enough opportunities for staff to improve their teaching skills, for example by observing the outstanding practice of others.

The school has the following strengths

- Pupils achieve well because they are valued and motivated. Most pupils make good progress in reading, writing and mathematics and most now reach standards in reading, writing and mathematics that are similar to the national average for their age. The proportion reaching higher standards is increasing.
- Teaching is good. Whole-school topics capture the imagination of pupils. This encourages them to be inquisitive and find things out for themselves.
- Pupils' good behaviour in lessons and around school helps to make sure that the school is calm and purposeful. Pupils say they feel safe.
- The new headteacher is working well with other professionals to drive whole-school changes. Areas for development identified at the previous inspection and during the HMI visits are being dealt with effectively in a relatively short space of time.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed teaching in eight lessons. In addition, the inspectors made a number of short visits to lessons and listened to pupils read.
- Discussions were held with: school staff; groups of pupils; members of the governing body; a representative from the local authority.
- The inspectors observed the school's work and looked at a wide range of documentation including safeguarding documents, the school's procedures for gaining an accurate view of its own performance, its development plans, records of pupils' standards and progress, documents relating to attendance and behaviour, and pupils' work in their books.
- There were 16 parental responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View). The school's recent surveys of parents' and pupils' views were also taken into account as were the seven responses to the inspection questionnaire for staff.

Inspection team

Naomi Taylor, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

John Ellwood

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Bewcastle is very much smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- The proportion of pupils for whom the school receives the pupil premium is lower than that found nationally. (The pupil premium is additional government funding for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and those children that are looked after by the local authority.)
- The proportion of pupils supported at school action is lower than that found nationally.
- The proportion supported by school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is also lower than average.
- All pupils are White British.
- Pupils are mainly taught in two classes. Class 1 comprises pupils from the Early Years Foundation Stage and Years 1 and 2. Class 2 comprises Years 3, 4, 5 and 6.
- Since the previous inspection the school has been supported by the headteacher of St Michael's Church of England Primary School in Dalston, who is a National Leader in Education and the headteacher of Long Marton Primary School, who is a Local Leader in Education. In addition there is on-going support from an independent mathematics consultant.
- The local authority has undertaken a review of the governing body and has provided training and support for governors.
- Since the previous inspection, a new headteacher has been appointed.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve leadership and management, including governance, by:
 - developing the new system for tracking pupils' progress to regularly check on how well all pupils are doing
 - enabling the teachers who have responsibility for leading subjects to improve the quality of teaching in those subjects across the school
 - building on the recent training for governors to give them the confidence to challenge information that they are presented with and thereby contribute effectively to whole-school improvements
 - further developing systems to improve pupils' attendance.
- Improve the quality of teaching further and raise achievement for all pupils by:
 - ensuring that pupils have sufficient time to respond to teachers' marking and learn from their mistakes
 - providing opportunities for staff to improve their own skills, for example by observing the outstanding practice of others.
- Ensure that the school website is kept up to date and contains the required information.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- The very caring staff team works closely with parents to make sure that children settle well into school life. Most children start school with skills and knowledge typical for their age, although their skills are sometimes lower than this, especially in communication. Children enjoy a wide range of activities and have opportunities to explore and find out things for themselves, both in the classroom and outdoors. They make good progress and are well prepared for Year 1.
- Reading remains a priority throughout the school. The younger pupils use their phonics skills (letters and the sounds they make) to work out unfamiliar words. By the end of Year 2 pupils reach standards in reading which are above average and they have developed a love of books. Following a significant decline in standards in Year 6 in 2012, there is a rapidly improving picture, with current pupils across Key Stage 2 making good progress with their reading.
- Standards in writing by the end of Year 2 are consistently above average. Topic work shows that Key Stage 2 pupils have a broad range of opportunities to develop their writing skills and the school is rightly prioritising the development of pupils' ability to check their own spellings.
- Across Key Stage 2 there has been more of a mixed picture, with standards varying from year to year. The very small numbers of pupils in each year group can cause test results to vary considerably from year to year. However, the 2013 Key Stage 2 test results showed a significant improvement from the dip in 2012. Current school data show that Key Stage 2 pupils are now on track to do well.
- An expert in mathematics continues to work closely with the school and as a result, pupils' progress is rapidly accelerating. In 2013, pupils reached above average standards by the end of Year 2 and all pupils currently in Year 2 are on track to reach the higher Level 3 in mathematics. Improvements can be seen across year groups in Key Stage 2, with pupils now making good progress and an increasing proportion on track to reach the higher Level 5.
- Support for the most-able pupils, disabled pupils and those with special educational needs is good. Pupils from these groups are learning well and make at least good progress across school. This is because their needs are identified early and additional learning activities that challenge pupils to think hard are delivered by well trained staff.
- Pupils who are eligible for pupil premium funding make good progress. The school uses the pupil premium funding effectively to support these pupils. This includes pupils known to be eligible for free school meals. Numbers in each cohort are too small to report on their attainment.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching is good because, from an early age, pupils are encouraged to develop a sense of curiosity and find out things for themselves. Classrooms are organised well and the content and timing of activities engage pupils well. Pupils have a clear understanding of their targets and they are eager to learn.
- There are increasing opportunities to use and apply literacy and numeracy skills across the curriculum. This was seen in Key Stage 2 when pupils were developing their opinions of whether or not countries should spend money on sending people into space. In small groups, pupils were given a number of statements to consider whether or not they agreed or disagreed with them. They talked animatedly together about the pros and cons and considered the impact on the environment, value for money and developed their global understanding of priorities for different countries. Pupils made good progress in developing their writing skills while considering worldwide issues.
- A whole-school approach to teaching mathematics is being put in place. Pupils are encouraged to develop their numeracy skills in a practical way and this was seen in the infant class when Key Stage 1 pupils were using their understanding of co-ordinates to develop their own maps and plot where hidden treasure might be found. The Early Years Foundation Stage pupils were simultaneously moving freely from indoors to outside and encouraged to use their imagination

and hide treasure in the sand and in the water. All pupils found this work enjoyable and were clearly making good progress.

- Good use is made of the expansive outdoor areas at the school and aspects of science are made real, with pupils being encouraged to grow plants and vegetables from seed. They discover how to provide habitats for bugs and grubs and watch their development, which increases pupils' understanding of the wildlife around them.
- Since the previous inspection, there have been improvements in the quality of marking to help pupils understand how to improve their work. However, pupils are not always given time to respond to teachers' marking and so they do not learn from their mistakes as well as they could.
- Effective teamwork by teachers and skilled teaching assistants ensures a high level of support for all groups of pupils.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Discussions with pupils, parents and staff, alongside school records and the responses to 'Parent View', confirm that this is the norm. Interruptions to learning in lessons are rare. Parents believe that their children are well cared for by a staff team with an 'open door' policy.
- Older pupils enjoy taking responsibilities, such as taking turns to write the menu for the day on the board near to the kitchen. They are encouraged to think carefully about the spellings of the meals available and their friends help them with this.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good.
- Pupils develop a good understanding of different forms of bully, such as cyber-bullying and this helps them to keep safe when using technology both in school and at home. They say that bullying 'just doesn't happen' but they would be able to talk to any adult if they thought that this was happening to them or someone else.
- The school has its own swimming pool and the vast majority leave school as competent swimmers. They understand how to avoid the potential risks rivers and brooks in their rural community can hold.
- Parents are delighted with how the school ensures that all pupils, whatever their additional needs, access everything that the school has to offer, both in terms of academic and also personal development. There is equality of opportunity for all pupils.
- The older pupils gain experience in how to stay safe in unfamiliar surroundings when they embark on their annual residential trips. 'Bikeability' sessions help them to cycle safely and develop awareness of other road users.
- The primary school sport funding is used to provide additional sporting activities, including lacrosse and dance sessions for pupils. Some of these activities are taught by external coaches. This helps to improve pupils' well-being as well as teachers' skills, so that they can teach a wider range of sporting activities to an even higher standard.
- Pupils' attendance is broadly average, although there are a very small minority whose learning is interrupted by below average attendance.

The leadership and management Requires improvement

- As was the case at the previous inspection, leadership and management require further improvements. With effective support from external professionals, the new headteacher has developed a clear understanding of the school's priorities for improvement. Actions to address these have been identified, but not yet put fully in place.
- The headteacher has introduced a new tracking system which is being used to check the progress of Key Stage 2 pupils. However, this has not yet been extended across the school to check the progress of all pupils. As a result, pupils' progress is not accelerating as quickly as it could.

- There has been some delegation of management responsibilities to teachers, but some are at an early stage in leading whole school improvements for their areas of responsibility resulting in much of the burden of improvement still falling to the headteacher.
- The headteacher checks the quality of teaching, which now directly links with further staff training, as well as decisions about salary progression. Opportunities for teachers to develop their own skills through being able to observe outstanding practice are limited.
- Systems and procedures for improving pupils' attendance are not fully in place and therefore improvement in attendance for some pupils is too slow.
- Topic work and use of the outdoor and rural environment are enjoyed by pupils and bring learning to life. Visitors and trips ensure that pupils develop an understanding of life beyond the somewhat isolated communities. For example, many have experienced the thrill of singing in Carlisle Cathedral and engaging in sports competitions with other schools. These experiences contribute well to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- The school website is under construction and currently does not contain all the information that is required. For example, the school prospectus is out of date.
- Safeguarding arrangements meet statutory requirements.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Since the previous inspection the local authority has increased its support for the school. An adviser has led a review of the governing body. This has been acted upon effectively and committees have now been formed and a clerk to the governors appointed. Training has also been provided by the local authority. However, inspection evidence indicates that some governors are still at an early stage in developing their confidence to question and challenge information presented to them in order to drive improvements in improving the quality of teaching and pupils' progress further. The headteacher and governors have, however, worked hard in a short space of time to achieve financial stability for the school. Governors contribute to discussions about how additional funds such as the pupil premium and the primary schools' sport funding should be spent, but are not diligent in checking that it has a positive effect on pupils' progress. They are aware of the quality of teaching and there are now links between teachers, including the headteacher, meeting targets and their salary progression.

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	112103
Local authority	Cumbria
Inspection number	442411

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	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	32
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Billy Nelson
Headteacher	Georgina Harland
Date of previous school inspection	19 February 2013
Telephone number	01697 748662
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