

Askam Village School

Lots Road, Askam-in-Furness, Cumbria, LA16 7DA

Inspection dates

3–4 June 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Requires improvement	3
	This inspection:	Requires improvement	3
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

- Between Years 1 and 6, achievement requires improvement. Too few pupils make good progress from their starting points, particularly in writing and mathematics. Standards by the end of Year 2 and 6 are below average. Too few pupils reach the higher levels of attainment.
- Teaching is not always good enough to raise standards and to ensure pupils make consistently good progress. Information from assessing pupils' skills and abilities is not always used well to provide work that is well matched to pupils' varying needs. Work for the most able pupils often lacks challenge.
- Activities sometimes fail to motivate pupils or maintain their interest. As a result, attitudes to learning are not consistently good and behaviour requires improvement.
- Pupils are not yet fully able to use their mathematical problem-solving skills across different subjects. This is having an impact on progress.
- Pupils are not given enough opportunities to write regularly for a range of purposes and across the subjects to ensure their skills in writing develop quickly.
- The information gathered to track pupils' achievement is not used effectively or shared well enough among staff. As a result, teachers do not always adjust their teaching so that learning closely meets pupils' needs.
- Middle leaders do not provide effective support to the headteacher. They do not have the confidence or necessary skills to challenge or support staff to quickly improve the quality of teaching and achievement.

The school has the following strengths

- Governance has improved since the last inspection. It is now well placed to support and challenge the school effectively.
- The headteacher and senior management team have put in place a number of key actions that are now raising achievement, especially in reading.
- Children achieve well in the Early Years Foundation Stage.
- By the end of Year 1, pupils' understanding of letters and the sounds they make is good.
- There are many opportunities for pupils to excel in music and sport and to learn beyond lessons. As a result, pupils enjoy school.
- Relationships between pupils and their teachers are strong. The school's work to keep pupils safe is good and pupils feel safe.

Information about this inspection

- The inspection observed teaching and learning in 10 lessons. One of the lessons was jointly observed with the headteacher.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, with the coordinators of mathematics, four members of the governing body and a representative from the local authority.
- Inspectors observed the school's work, looked at a wide range of pupil progress data, the school's view of its own effectiveness and its performance management information. They scrutinised behaviour and attendance records as well as documents relating to safeguarding and observed behaviour in the majority of classrooms and around the school.
- The inspectors looked at a range of pupils' work in books, listened to pupils read and talked to groups of pupils in Key Stage 2.
- Inspectors took account of 24 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View), a recent school survey of parental views and spoke with parents at the beginning of each day.
- Account was taken of six questionnaires returned by members of school staff.
- During both days of the inspection, 32 Year 5 and 6 pupils and two senior leaders were on a residential trip in London.

Inspection team

Pauline Pitman, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Shiela Mawer

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This is a smaller than average-sized primary school. It has a nursery, where children attend in the mornings.
- Most pupils are of White British heritage.
- The proportion of pupils supported at 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 well below average. The pupil premium is additional funding for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and children looked after by the local authority.
- The school meets the government's current floor standard, which set out the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress by the end of Year 6.
- The school works with other local schools through the Furness Primary Collaborative. Since the previous inspection, the headteacher has worked with a range of external professionals, including the local authority and one of Her Majesty's Inspectors.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching so that it is consistently good or better by making sure that:
 - information from assessing what pupils know and can do is used well to provide work that meets pupils' varying needs and abilities
 - work is suitably challenging, especially for the most able, and that expectations that pupils can reach the higher levels of attainment are always high
 - pupils respond to teachers' marking and advice and correct mistakes so that they can improve their work and good marking practices are shared among staff
 - activities provided are interesting and exciting and progress at a good pace so that pupils' motivation and concentration is maintained and attitudes to learning are good.
- Raise pupils' achievement, particularly between Years 1 and 6 and in writing and mathematics, so that progress is consistently good by:
 - making sure pupils are given interesting and challenging mathematical activities that enable them to apply their skills to solving real-life problems so that they acquire a deeper understanding of mathematical concepts
 - pupils are given the opportunities to write regularly and for a range of purposes, including as part of work across the subjects
 - developing pupils' spelling, punctuation, handwriting and grammatical skills systematically so that by Year 6 they write with fluency and accuracy and always present their work neatly.
- Strengthen the impact of leadership and management on improving the quality of teaching and learning by:
 - developing the roles of middle leaders so that they have the confidence and skills to challenge and support staff to improve teaching.
 - making sure that the information gathered to track pupils' achievement is used effectively and regularly shared among staff and that teachers use it to adjust their teaching so that learning meets the needs of pupils more closely.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils requires improvement

- When children start school in the Early Years Foundation Stage, their skills, knowledge and understanding is below that seen typically for their age, especially in communication skills, mathematics and their personal and social development. By the end of Key Stage 1 and 2, standards of attainment overall in reading, writing and mathematics are below average. Although children in the Early Years Foundation Stage are achieving well, between Years 1 and 6, achievement requires improvement because too few pupils make good progress, particularly in writing and mathematics.
- The achievement of the most able pupils requires improvement. By the end of Year 2, most pupils reach the nationally expected Level 2. However, too few pupils achieve beyond this. In Year 2 in 2013, for example, no pupils reached the higher Level 3 in reading, writing or mathematics. Similarly, the proportion of pupils that reach the higher Level 5 by the end of Year 6 in reading, writing and mathematics is much lower than average. The most able pupils are not provided with work that is challenging enough. Expectations that they will reach the higher levels of attainment are sometimes too low.
- In Year 6 in 2013, the proportion of pupils making expected progress since the start of Year 3 compared favourably with the proportion nationally in reading and writing. However, too few made expected progress in mathematics. School data and inspection evidence show that achievement in mathematics is improving, with more pupils making expected or better progress. Even so, pupils do not always acquire a good level of understanding of mathematical concepts because they are not given enough opportunities to solve real-life mathematical problems.
- Achievement in reading is improving. Younger children make good progress developing their knowledge of letters and the sounds they make. As a result, the proportion of pupils reaching the expected standards in the national reading screening check at the end of Year 1 in 2013 was above average. Pupils enjoy reading. There are more regular and specific opportunities for pupils to practice their reading and apply their skills in other lessons.
- Although some improvements are also evident in pupils' writing skills, by Year 6 too few pupils are able to write with good levels of accuracy, fluency or present their written work neatly. Over time pupils' spelling, punctuation, handwriting and grammatical skills have not been systematically developed. Older pupils do not know how to structure their writing effectively. This is particularly the case for less able pupils and those in need of additional support. Pupils are not given enough opportunities to write for a range of purposes and often enough, including across the subjects, to ensure their writing skills develop at a good rate.
- The very small number of pupils supported by the pupil premium, including those known to be eligible for free school meals, are making progress similar to and sometimes better than other pupils. In Year 6 in 2013, there was little difference in the attainment of eligible pupils and their classmates, although their attainment was about one term below similar pupils nationally. As a result, their achievement requires improvement.
- Achievement of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs requires improvement. Although pupils make expected progress, progress is not always good because their needs and additional support is not always identified and provided for swiftly enough.
- Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage achieve well because they are well taught. Resources are well used so that learning meets their varying needs. Children enjoy accessing a broad range of activities inside and outdoors.
- Although inspection evidence shows that gaps in attainment are closing, there is still too much variation in the achievement of pupils between subjects and different classes. This shows that the school's efforts are not yet wholly successful.

The quality of teaching requires improvement

- Although there have been improvements in teaching not enough is consistently good or better to enable all groups of pupils between Years 1 and 6 to achieve well, particularly in writing and mathematics.
- The information collected from assessing what pupils know and can do is not always used well to provide work that is well matched to pupils' varying needs and abilities. Often, work lacks challenge, particularly for the most able pupils. Expectations of what pupils are to achieve are sometimes too low.
- Activities do not always interest or challenge pupils enough to maintain their concentration and motivation. As a result, attitudes to learning and the behaviour of a few pupils sometimes wane.
- The quality of marking is variable. Typically, teachers make helpful suggestions as to how pupils can improve their work. However, pupils do not always respond to the help and advice given by correcting and learning from their mistakes and, therefore, improving their work. This slows pupils' achievement, particularly in writing and mathematics. Good marking practices are not yet shared effectively among staff.
- The teaching of mathematics requires improvement. Leaders know that in the past pupils have not been given enough opportunities to use and apply their mathematical skills to solve real-life mathematical problems. This is why for example, a special 'problem-solving day' was recently held. However, there are not enough on-going opportunities for pupils to use their problem-solving skills widely across subjects by completing interesting, challenging or engaging tasks.
- The teaching of reading has improved and more pupils are making good progress. Pupils, for example, now read more regularly in small groups, effectively guided by their teacher.
- The teaching of writing is also improving. Fortnightly 'talk homework', for example, enables pupils to talk through their plans for writing at home so they are better prepared for writing in school. Homework books in Year 3 reveal good opportunities for practising skills learnt in school. However, achievement in writing continues to be hampered because pupils' spelling, punctuation, handwriting and grammatical skills are not developed systematically. Pupils are given too few opportunities to practice them in their work across subjects.
- Relationships between teachers and pupils are strong, creating a positive learning atmosphere. Where teaching is good, pupils work really well together, are confident and respond quickly and eagerly to teachers' questions. Year 5 pupils were proud to show their story writing to the teacher and friends, for example.
- Teaching in the Early Years Foundation Stage is good. A good range of stimulating and exciting activities, along with timely and effective adult support are provided to ensure learning meets children's varying needs.

The behaviour and safety of pupils requires improvement

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement. The slow pace of learning in some lessons, along with a lack of challenge from activities provided reflects in pupils' attitudes to learning. Some pupils fail to concentrate fully on their work, become restless and fidget and need regular reminders about good behaviour.
- Good behaviour is evident where learning is more interesting, exciting or engaging. Year 3 pupils, for example, enthusiastically located countries involved in the Football World Cup; their good behaviour, hard work and cooperation contributed to their good achievement.
- During playtime and around school pupils are generally polite and friendly. They greet visitors with warmth and are genuinely proud of their school. They are encouraged to keep the garden areas clean and to plant flowers.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Parents, pupils and staff acknowledge this. The headteacher, along with the appropriate authorities, act swiftly to assess potential risks to make sure that pupils learn within a safe environment. Any issues that arise are given high priority and leaders and governors respond quickly.

- Pupils have a good understanding of how to keep themselves safe. They are aware of the potential dangers of the internet. They know how to look after themselves and to support younger pupils. Safety is taken into account during science experiments. Visits from the police, and assemblies, increase pupils' awareness of safety.
- Pupils have a good awareness of different forms of bullying. There have been no reported racist incidents in recent years. Although incidents of bullying are rare, pupils say that occasionally there is some nasty name-calling, but is dealt with very quickly.
- For the past three years attendance has been above or similar to the national average.

The leadership and management

requires improvement

- Leadership and management require improvement because teaching and pupils' achievement have not improved enough since the last inspection. Teaching and achievement, although steadily improving, are not yet good.
- Over several years, the headteacher and governing body have faced significant challenges in relation to managing budgetary constraints and the need to reduce staffing. They have shown remarkable resilience; working closely together to make best use of available resources. However, these challenges have hampered efforts to rapidly improve teaching and achievement. Following recent external support, however, they are now shifting their focus successfully back on to improving teaching and learning.
- A more robust system is now in place to manage the performance of staff and to review and check teaching practices. Each teacher now has clear objectives for improving their teaching, which are carefully linked to the school's improvement priorities. Pay awards now will depend on whether objectives have been achieved and on pupils' good achievement.
- The headteacher is supported by senior leaders in driving improvement. Her ability to confidently delegate more responsibility to middle leaders is held back because their roles are not yet fully developed. Middle leaders do not yet have the skills or confidence to effectively challenge and support staff to improve the quality and consistency of teaching. As a result, the leadership of teaching requires improvement.
- Although pupils' progress is checked regularly and accurately, leaders do not yet ensure that this information is always used to good effect and to ensure that teachers adjust learning to meet the varying needs of pupils more closely. As a result, pupils do not yet achieve well.
- Overall, the curriculum offers an appropriate balance. It provides many opportunities for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, including several trips and residential visits. Pupils say they particularly enjoy history, geography, science week and the recent 'problem-solving day'. Leaders are improving the curriculum by developing more innovative approaches to learning. The introduction of a competitive mathematics software package has, for example, captured pupils' imagination and is leading to greater enjoyment of the subject. Further curriculum revisions are required, however, to ensure that pupils develop their basic skills at a good rate, particularly in writing and mathematics.
- Sport and music are school strengths. A number of pupils play sport at a community or national level. Good use is made of the primary school sports funding to further enhance staff training and to improve pupils' participation in sport by providing a wider range of sporting activities such as dance and swimming in Year 2.
- The leadership of the Early Years Foundation Stage is good and has improved the quality of provision since the last inspection. For example, the environment for learning outdoors has been further developed and provides good opportunities for extending children's learning. Good partnerships established between home and school ensure that children settle very quickly into school life.
- Since the last inspection the local authority has worked in partnership with the school and helped to strengthen governance. It continues to work with the school because teaching and learning are not yet consistently good.
- **The governance of the school:**

- Since the last inspection, a detailed review of the work of the governing body has taken place. Subsequent training has been successful and has strengthened the quality of governance considerably. Governors are now equipped with the necessary skills to support and challenge the headteacher and to hold the school to account.
- They have a good understanding of how well the school performs, including in comparison to other schools. This means that they now ask pertinent questions about pupils' progress, any gaps in learning and why standards are not high enough. They are fully aware of how the primary school sport and pupil premium funding is allocated and are now starting to consider its impact on pupils' progress more carefully.
- Governors know about the school's priorities. Their frequency of visits to classrooms has increased and as a result, they have an improved understanding of the quality of teaching across the school. Governors have ensured that arrangements to manage the performance of staff have been strengthened so that, in the future, staff only receive pay awards when targets for their own and pupils' performance have been met.
- Governors are very committed and bring a strong sense of community to the school. They know many of the parents very well. They ensure that arrangements to safeguard pupils meet statutory requirements.

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	112409
Local authority	Cumbria
Inspection number	442367

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Foundation
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	173
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Chris Reid
Headteacher	Fiona Newton
Date of previous school inspection	6 February 2013
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