

Bowness-on-Solway Primary School

Bowness-on-Solway, Wigton, Cumbria, CA7 5AF

Inspection dates 12–13 May 2015

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Early years provision		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Children get off to a good start in the early years. There are strong links with the on-site nursery. Children develop a love of learning and are keen to come to school. They achieve well.
- Pupils make good progress overall both in their personal development and academic achievement. Many are making rapid progress in response to more stable and consistent teaching.
- Pupils who have special educational needs are provided with a good level of support and most make the same good progress as other pupils.
- The standards that pupils attain by the end of Year 2 and Year 6 reflect their good achievement.
- The quality of teaching is good. Teachers plan activities to capture pupils' imaginations and develop their interests.
- The behaviour of pupils is good. They settle well to learning and show respect for others. Pupils say they feel safe at school and learn how to keep safe in other environments.
- The school promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well. Visitors and trips bring learning to life. Pupils enthusiastically take part in sports and productions.
- The curriculum is well planned. It provides pupils with stimulating experiences both within and beyond the school environment.
- The dedicated headteacher has implemented new procedures and initiatives. Staff share her desire for bringing out the best in pupils.
- Leaders and managers, including the governing body, are focused on driving improvements. This has led to improvements in the quality of teaching and pupils' achievements. This is an improving school.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Pupils do not always make the same rate of progress in writing as they do in other subjects because of mistakes in spelling, punctuation and grammar.
- The quality of marking is variable and teachers do not always make sure that pupils check, correct and improve their work so that they can learn from their mistakes.
- Some middle leaders have not fully developed whole-school initiatives to raise achievement in their areas of responsibility.
- There are not enough opportunities for the sharing of outstanding practice to help make teaching even better.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed teaching and learning in lessons taught by teachers, three of which were observed jointly with the headteacher. Sessions led by teaching assistants were observed and the inspector also listened to pupils read.
- Discussions were held with school staff, groups of pupils, the headteacher, governors and a representative from the local authority.
- The inspector 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, development plans, records of pupils' attainment and progress and documents relating to attendance and behaviour. She also scrutinised pupils' work in their books.
- There were too few parental responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) to generate a report. The inspector took account of the school's recent parent survey. In addition, the inspector spoke informally to parents during the course of the inspection. The five responses to the staff questionnaire were reviewed.

Inspection team

Naomi Taylor, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Bowness-on-Solway Primary School is much smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils supported by 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 who are looked after by the local authority.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs is average. There are no disabled pupils in the school.
- Almost all pupils are White British.
- Provision in the early years is full time.
- Most pupils are taught in mixed-aged classes.
- A higher than average proportion of pupils join the school other than at the usual point of admission.
- A period of unavoidable absence since the previous inspection led to some former and older pupils being taught by different teachers.
- Since the previous inspection, a new headteacher and a new teacher have been appointed.
- The school receives support from a headteacher who is a local leader in education (LLE) from Kirkbride Primary School.
- The school supports students from the University of Cumbria who are embarking on their training to become qualified teachers.
- There is a nursery and after-school provision on site which are not managed by the governing body and are subject to separate inspections. They receive separate reports which are available on the Ofsted website.
- The school does not meet the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 6.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Continue to improve teaching and learning in order to raise pupils' achievement further, especially in writing, by:
 - making high standards in handwriting, spelling and punctuation a routine expectation across the school
 - ensuring pupils are given time to respond to teachers' marking and learn from their mistakes.
- Improve the impact of leadership and management by:
 - developing the skills of middle leaders so that they are able to contribute fully to raising standards in their area of responsibility
 - increasing the opportunities for teachers to share outstanding practice.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher is highly ambitious for the school and is committed to providing the best possible learning experience for all pupils. Since her appointment, she has gained the full support of staff and governors. She has led the successful implementation of strategies to improve learning and teaching, including the appointment of a new member of staff to the school. This has provided much needed stability for pupils in Key Stage 2 and has accelerated their progress. This demonstrates that the school is well placed to continue to improve.
- The headteacher has successfully addressed a dip in standards since the previous inspection. As a result, there has been a recent, rapid rise in speeding up pupils' progress.
- Priorities are clearly stated in the school's improvement plan and leaders' judgements of its performance are realistic. This is because they effectively check on the quality of learning and teaching in the school and have a clear view of how to continue to raise standards.
- Staff are given goals to ensure pupils make good progress and this is directly linked to salary progression. The headteacher is highly effective in building a strong team of staff while holding them to account for high standards in all that they do. She leads by example.
- The headteacher has effectively developed the role of middle leaders so that they now track the progress of pupils across the school in their areas of responsibility. However, some are at an early stage in implementing change to raise achievement in their areas of responsibility.
- There are effective links with other schools which provide support for the headteacher and the literacy leader. However, there are not enough opportunities for staff to share best practice.
- Pupil premium funding is used effectively to support those pupils for whom it is intended and spending has a positive impact on eligible pupils. This confirms the school's commitment to promoting equality of opportunity.
- Since the previous inspection, the school has received valuable support from the local leader in education. The local authority has provided 'light touch' support, reflecting the strength of the leadership team.
- The engaging curriculum enthuses pupils and prepares them well for life in modern Britain. High quality art work and musical performances demonstrate how pupils are encouraged to excel in all that they do.
- The school promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well. There are staff in the school who are extremely well travelled and have worked overseas. Their experience brings an insight into other cultures and demonstrates the commitment of the school to tackling discrimination. Learning about other religions leads, for example, to pupils preparing a meal for the Jewish Passover Seder ritual. This helps to build an understanding of faiths different to their own and to foster good relations with all.
- The school is at the heart of the community. Pupils engage in keeping local traditions alive, such as the annual Bowness Bells re-enactment and learning about haaf netting, a form of fishing which the Vikings brought to the area. This type of activity reinforces pupils' understanding of British values and the importance of contributing to the life of the community.
- The primary school physical education and sport funding is used well to broaden sporting opportunities for pupils and develop the expertise of staff. Using specialist coaches has, for example, led to increased opportunities in activities such as gymnastics and tennis. Pupils learn to dance and recently performed in a theatre in the city of Carlisle. All of this has increased pupils' participation in engaging in healthy lifestyles in school and beyond.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governors are highly committed to and supportive of the school. Since the previous inspection, they have had the support of the local authority in making the appointment of a new headteacher. They demonstrated their determination to find the right person for the school by re-advertising until they were satisfied with their final choice.
 - Long-standing governors have seen how their role has changed over many years. This has led to a thorough induction for new governors so that they clearly understand the need for a balance of support and challenge for the school.
 - With fluctuating numbers of pupils, the school finances are carefully managed. The school is now in a healthy financial position, having previously been in deficit.
 - Governors attend training so that they have the knowledge and skills needed to hold school leaders to account for standards at the school. The governing body has an accurate view of pupils' achievement and the quality of teaching because its members receive comprehensive reports, including data, from the headteacher which they question and challenge.

- Governors check that systems to manage staff performance are implemented and that teachers' pay reflects how effective they are. They tackle any underperformance in the classroom with rigour.
- Governors make sure that statutory requirements in relation to safeguarding and child protection are met and that pupils and staff are kept safe effectively.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. This view is reflected in all of the responses to the staff questionnaire, in the views of all parents who met the inspector and those who responded to the school's parental survey. Drivers of the buses talked about pupils' good behaviour and how they are made to feel part of the school. For example, they read *Don't let the pigeon drive the bus* to the children during World Book Day.
- From an early age, pupils learn good manners. In the early years, children politely say 'excuse me,' 'please' and 'thank you' as they go about their learning and play.
- During lunchtime, pupils sit and chat together as they enjoy wholesome, home-made meals or a packed lunch. They appreciate how the cook gets involved in their topic work. For example, when pupils were learning about Chinese New Year, they enjoyed an authentic Chinese meal for their lunch.
- Older pupils enjoy looking after the younger children. The headteacher instigated the idea of having a school council and recent elections have led to a council being formed. At meetings, pupils consider messages left in the suggestion box and this has led to the purchase of more outdoor play equipment for breaktimes.
- Pupils wear their uniform with pride and look very smart. They feel valued as unique individuals who make up the harmonious Bowness team.
- The school is successful in helping those pupils with social and emotional issues to make appropriate choices and improve their behaviour.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good.
- At the start of the school day, pupils are escorted from the bus into the school yard. Older pupils keep an eye on younger children during the bus journeys, developing their sense of responsibility to others.
- Digital leaders, who were successful in their application and interview for these posts, help younger pupils to use computers safely. There is a high level of awareness about the dangers of making friends through the internet.
- Staff make pupils aware of how to keep safe. Pupils understand different forms of bullying such as cyber-bullying and homophobic bullying. Pupils and parents who spoke with the inspector reported that they were adamant that there is no bullying and had confidence that if there were concerns, adults would sort them out quickly and fairly.
- A very small minority of parents felt that communication could sometimes be better between school and home. The inspector explored this concern but evidence showed that the school is thorough in acting on and recording concerns effectively and appropriately.
- With trips to cities and outdoor centres, pupils learn how to keep safe in environments very different to their home villages. This also helps to prepare them for life in modern Britain.
- Attendance is higher than the national average for most pupils and reflects just how much pupils enjoy coming to school. Punctuality is excellent.

The quality of teaching is good

- Pupils now make good progress because of the effective quality of teaching and assessment in a wide range of subjects. This is further confirmed by work in pupils' books and by the school's records of pupils' progress.
- Staff respect the fact that every pupil is unique and take care to make sure that individual learning and pastoral needs are well met. Teachers and teaching assistants work well together, which results in an excellent level of support especially for the least able pupils and those who are new to the school.
- Teachers use questions skilfully to assess pupils' learning throughout the lesson. Pupils discuss their ideas and learn from each other. Classrooms are organised well and the content and timing of activities are planned effectively.

- Pupils refer to learning as being 'fun' and this was seen when Year 1 were exploring measuring different amounts of liquids. The teacher had brought her shopping to school and pupils were fascinated to find out how much liquid each container held when they worked out who had estimated most accurately. This work brought mathematics to life for the pupils.
- Phonics (matching letters to the sounds that they make) is well taught and this was seen in the early years and Key Stage 1. Not a minute was wasted in Reception as pupils went about learning new sounds. As they blended the sounds with other letters, they sounded out new words to broaden their vocabulary. Pupils who read to the inspector demonstrated how well they used this method to work out unfamiliar words. They develop a love of books from a young age.
- Opportunities for writing in different genres across a range of topics and subjects have increased. For example, pupils in Years 4, 5 and 6 were seen writing in an exaggerated manner to produce a 'tall tale' based on fantasy. In comparison, Years 2 and 3 recorded factual information following their science experiment in which they heated up solids and liquids. Although topic work is also capturing pupils' imaginations to write, the standard of handwriting, spelling and punctuation is variable across different subjects and year groups.
- Teachers mark work regularly. They praise pupils for work which is well done and usually provide good advice on how it could be improved still further. However, teachers do not always check that pupils do their corrections or follow advice when it is given so that they can always learn from their mistakes.
- Effective teamwork by teachers and teaching assistants ensures a high level of support for all groups of pupils.

The achievement of pupils is good

- Following a dip in standards in 2014, pupils are now making good progress across all year groups and subjects. They are well prepared for the next stage in their education.
- In 2014, the proportion of pupils attaining the expected level in the Year 1 phonics screening check was similar to the national average. Teachers and teaching assistants are skilled in the teaching of phonics. The very few pupils who struggle to read are given effective support and this leads to improvements. Pupils develop a love of books from an early age and the older pupils talked to the inspector about their favourite books and authors.
- Assessment and test results at the end of Key Stages 1 and 2 vary because they are dependent on the attainment of very small groups of pupils. These small cohorts often include pupils who have started school at times other than expected and who have not benefited, therefore, from the good start in the Reception class.
- In Key Stage 1, all pupils reached at least the expected levels in reading and mathematics in 2014. Not all reached the expected level in writing. Current work in books shows almost all Year 2 pupils are now working at the expected levels or higher.
- As in Key Stage 1, standards are now rising in Key Stage 2. In 2014, almost a third of pupils joined during Key Stage 2. The proportion reaching the expected levels was broadly in line with the national average in mathematics and higher in reading. However, in writing and spelling, punctuation and grammar tests, results were lower than the national average. With the headteacher's drive on improving the quality of teaching, there has been rapid progress with almost all current Year 6 working at least at the expected level across all subjects. Whatever their starting points, the vast majority of pupils are now making good progress.
- Most pupils who have special educational needs make good progress. This is because their additional needs are now identified early and are fully met through one-to-one and small-group sessions delivered by highly skilled teaching assistants. Strong links with external agencies also support both the academic and personal needs of individual pupils.
- Pupil premium funding is used effectively and is directed towards supporting the few disadvantaged pupils. This ensures that they make equally good progress as their classmates. The number of disadvantaged pupils in each year group is too small to compare meaningfully the standards they reach with non-disadvantaged pupils nationally or in the school. Inspection evidence shows that as pupils move through the school, gaps between disadvantaged and other pupils are closing rapidly.
- The most-able pupils make good progress. For example, in the last two years there have been pupils working at levels normally associated with Key Stage 3 in mathematics.

The early years provision**is good**

- The school makes excellent arrangements to introduce children and their parents into the early years setting. There are exceptionally strong links with the nursery on-site and very effective partnerships are built with parents during visits to the school. Parents and staff complete a diary which the children take home each evening and there are daily opportunities to meet at the start and end of the school day. As a result, children settle in quickly and are soon happy, secure and ready to learn.
- An extremely variable but small number join Reception each year. As a result, their skills when they start and the standards they reach at the end of early years fluctuate considerably. From their varied starting points, children achieve well and good levels of development are evident. They are well prepared for learning in Year 1.
- Good leadership and management of the early years make sure that the effective staff team keeps children safe and secure, helps them to understand routines and enjoy school. Children demonstrated their awareness of how to keep safe when mud was seen on the floor. Without hesitation, they volunteered to go and get cones so that children kept away from the area to avoid slipping.
- Children are keen to learn and behave well. Good teaching and care, together with well-planned activities that are interesting and fun, keep children engaged and support learning extremely well.
- Activities inside and outdoors motivate children so that they want to learn. For example, after recounting the main order of events in *The Bear Hunt*, pupils embarked on their own bear hunt in the field and adjoining woodland area. The children were very excited as they found a range of clues to guide them from one place to the next. Staff were highly skilled in questioning children so that they could use their imaginations to describe a wide range of environments such as a desert, boggy land near a river and a gated area. While the children were having lots of fun, they were developing their speaking and listening skills and broadening their vocabulary.
- The 'learning journals' give a detailed account of the good progress of individual children. Staff use these to record achievements. This helps in planning activities which challenge children to meet new goals.
- Robust assessment procedures are in place to ensure that all groups of children achieve equally well, including those children in receipt of additional funding, children with special educational needs and the most-able.

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	112414
Local authority	Cumbria
Inspection number	461724

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	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	57
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Matthew Wind
Headteacher	Susan Davies
Date of previous school inspection	7 March 2012
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