

Low Furness CofE Primary School

Church Road, Great Urswick, Ulverston, Cumbria LA12 0TA

Inspection dates

2–3 February 2017

Overall effectiveness	Requires improvement
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Requires improvement
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Requires improvement
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Requires improvement
Early years provision	Outstanding
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- Pupils' progress in writing and mathematics varies because teaching is not as effective as it could be for some year groups, whereas pupils make consistently strong progress in reading.
- Leaders and governors have not been effective in sustaining the strengths identified in the previous inspection. Actions to tackle weaknesses in teaching are taken too slowly, or not checked well enough to see if they are making a difference.
- Leaders have only very recently introduced their preferred approach to assessment of the new national curriculum. Leaders, including governors, are not yet able to use this information well enough to identify differences in the progress made by groups of pupils.
- Teachers do not all follow the expectations of the school to help pupils to improve their spelling, punctuation and grammar. Some pupils continue to make the same errors.
- Teaching in mathematics is improving. However, teaching assistants and other adults who help pupils sometimes teach methods that are not appropriate, or mark pupils' work incorrectly, which causes confusion.
- Governors do not know enough about how the additional funding for primary physical education and sport is used.
- Some policies on the school website were out of date because governors are not fully aware of their responsibilities to make sure that this information is accurate and up to date.

The school has the following strengths

- Pupils are extremely well cared for because school leaders provide an enriching and broad range of experiences which teach them how to keep safe and prepare pupils particularly well for life in modern Britain.
- Pupils have high future aspirations, showing good understanding of the skills needed for employment in science and technology.
- Pupils love their school, which is reflected in their good attendance. Behaviour is good.
- Pupils make good progress in reading because the teaching of reading is highly effective, including the teaching of phonics.
- Leadership and teaching in the early years are highly effective and lead to children sustaining high rates of progress.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the teaching of writing and mathematics, so that pupils make at least as much progress in these subjects as they do in reading, by teachers giving more attention to:
 - teaching spelling and checking that pupils learn from their errors
 - improving pupils' knowledge of punctuation so that they apply their skills correctly in their work
 - giving pupils correct explanations to support their understanding of mathematical concepts, especially for those who work with teaching assistants and other adults.
- Improve the effectiveness of leaders, including governors, by:
 - fully embedding the new assessment system and using it well to identify any differences in the progress made by groups of pupils
 - carrying out checks on the school's work more often to identify how well weaknesses in teaching are being tackled, and taking decisive action where weaknesses are not being tackled quickly enough
 - ensuring that governors are more rigorous in their approach to carrying out their responsibilities, including checking that policies are kept up to date and knowing about the difference being made by primary physical education and sport funding.

An external review of governance should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- Leaders know the strengths and weaknesses of the school well and take action to tackle the weaknesses. However, some actions are introduced too slowly and are then not checked thoroughly enough to see if they are making the intended difference, which has slowed down the rate of improvement seen at the time of the last inspection.
- Leaders did not recognise soon enough that pupils' progress in writing and in mathematics was slowing. Actions are now starting to improve mathematics, but improvements in writing are inconsistent. Not enough work has been done to ensure that pupils make as good progress in writing and mathematics as they do in reading and other areas in the school.
- Collaborative work with other schools in the Furness Primary Collaboration (FPC) is effective and makes sure teachers' assessments of pupils' work are accurate. Less rigour is seen in leaders' own checks on the school's work, which do not happen often enough.
- Following leaders' annual check on pupils' work in books, teachers are given clear targets for improvement but no further check is made to see if these targets are tackled, so weaknesses sometimes continue.
- Teaching assistants, and other adults who work with low-ability pupils and others who require support to help them to catch up, require further training to improve their skills in numeracy. This is because they do not always use appropriate methods for written and mental calculation in their explanations and sometimes mark pupils' work incorrectly. This goes unnoticed by teachers and leaders.
- Leaders have only very recently introduced their new approach to assessment of the new national curriculum. Leaders, including governors, are not yet able to use this information well to identify differences in progress for particular groups of pupils, such as the few disadvantaged pupils in a class and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, although the highly tailored and personalised support they receive is greatly appreciated by parents.
- Leaders, governors and staff work well together as a team, committed to make sure pupils have rich and memorable experiences at this school. Leaders have successfully improved the curriculum to extend and enrich the many opportunities available for pupils. A wide range of themes are taught well, and effective links made between subjects through 'topic', which includes history, geography and technology. Scientific understanding is reinforced well through practical investigations, leading to pupils making good progress.
- Pupils are well prepared for life in modern Britain. Older key stage 2 pupils understand the threats posed by terrorism and could also explain the difference between extremism and radicalisation. They are taught about other faiths and cultures and pupils were able to make connections between the 'Ten Commandments' and the 'Five Pillars of Islam'. Teachers help pupils to understand how to keep themselves safe including when using the internet, riding their bicycles and crossing the road.

- Spiritual, moral, social and cultural opportunities are many. Effective links are made between Christian values and British values through strong links with the local church. Work with the link school in Ghana supports pupils' understanding of being global citizens. The recent Ghana Day was very much enjoyed by pupils, who confidently explained differences in Ghanaian cultures compared with British culture and traditions. Pupils have a strong understanding of British values such as democracy. They are aware of injustices caused by what they perceive as inconsistent use of punishments by some staff.
- Teachers and teaching assistants feel valued and staff morale is high. All staff value the opportunities they are given to attend courses to help them to improve their skills, including opportunities for teaching assistants to complete a degree and train to become a teacher. Staff are proud to work at this school and fully support the work of leaders.
- Teachers know individual pupils exceptionally well, including identifying gaps in their learning. Working with a senior leader, teachers plan individual support for pupils to help to fill these gaps. This strategy is highly effective. An initial baseline check available through the published scheme, followed by a review at the end of the additional support, provides robust evidence that the support has worked.
- Additional support for pupils includes help in spelling, handwriting and mathematics, and help for pupils who have dyslexia. Where appropriate, this is paid for through pupil premium funding to help those pupils who are entitled to this support. Support is effective because it is highly tailored to pupils' individual needs, for example emotional support when a parent is working away from home.
- The local authority provides very little support for leaders as this is based on their analysis of need. Support is provided through other headteachers in the FPC, including peer reviews to validate self-evaluation.

Governance of the school

- Governors are committed to making improvements in the school. They have a good understanding of many areas of the school's work and, where changes have been made, the positive difference this is making. They know about the attainment of pupils who have left the school, but do not know as much about the progress current pupils are making because assessment systems are new and this information is not available.
- Governors have worked hard to reduce the budget deficit and, as a result, the school now has a healthy surplus budget. Plans are in place to use this to further improve the learning environment and teaching in the school. Governors know how pupil premium funding is used for this small group of pupils because leaders tell them about the support provided for individual pupils.
- Some of the information available for parents on the school website was inaccurate. Immediate action was taken during the inspection to make sure information was fully updated.
- Committees meet regularly and their findings are shared with the full governing body. For example, governors who are linked to subject areas share information on improvements made to teaching. However, governors who met with the inspector did not know enough about how additional funding is used, such as the primary physical education and sport premium. Governors do not know if this funding is making enough of a difference for pupils.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Leaders took immediate action during the inspection to improve the quality of information recorded on pre-employment checks that leaders carry out on staff. Further improvements were made to 'breakfast club' registers to make certain these are always accurate.
- All staff have completed safeguarding training to an appropriate level for their role in school. This includes updates on the most recent safeguarding guidance for schools and training in the risks associated with extremism and radicalisation. Staff know the correct procedures to follow if they have a concern about a child and staff are kept up to date with safeguarding news in weekly staff updates.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is too variable across some subjects and year groups. Teaching in writing and in mathematics is inconsistent, whereas strong and effective teaching of phonics and reading is seen across the school.
- Teachers have their own preferred strategy for pupils to correct spelling errors rather than following the school's expectations stated in the assessment policy. Pupils are unsure about how they should correct their errors, if at all. As a result, some pupils do not improve their spelling well enough and continue to make the same errors.
- Teachers sometimes do not give pupils precise enough advice to help them to improve their punctuation skills. Pupils are therefore unclear about what they need to do to improve their work, so are unable to act on the advice given to them. For example, in their writing, some pupils were told to 'improve neatness' but the main error was incorrect use of capital letters and help was needed with sentence construction.
- Teaching in mathematics is improving. Pupils are routinely asked to explain their working out and they are developing confidence in reasoning. Low-ability pupils are provided with a good range of resources to help them develop their understanding. Pupils enjoy solving problems and doing the many fun activities that teachers plan for them.
- Teaching assistants and other adults do not always explain work well enough to the pupils they are asked to support. Differences exist between the calculation methods used by teachers and those used by some teaching assistants and other adults who require further training to support good numeracy development.
- Leaders have very recently introduced a new strategy to improve handwriting, by teaching joined-up writing from the outset, including in the early years. This is new and it is too soon to see any impact of teachers' work on neater handwriting.
- Teachers have good subject knowledge and their thorough planning of a range of activities means all pupils are engaged and interested in their work. The most able pupils, as with those of other abilities, are given suitably challenging work to do which helps them to deepen their understanding, especially in mathematics.

- Teaching of reading, including phonics, is a consistent strength across the school and leads to pupils making rapid progress with their skills. Teachers are skilled in teaching phonics because of the high-quality training they have received. Pupils read well, appropriate to their stage, and with increasing confidence and comprehension, showing interest in the books they are reading.
- Teachers promote writing well in other subjects and pupils have plenty of opportunity to write at greater length across the curriculum. For example, in science pupils describe in detail the practical experiments they have carried out and make accurate predictions about what might happen; they describe well what they have found out.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding.
- Pupils are extremely well cared for because school leaders place great emphasis on keeping pupils safe. Pupils say they feel safe in school – a view supported by parents. Pupils have a good understanding of different forms of bullying and they know how to keep themselves safe when using the internet and email because they are taught about this using interesting and engaging resources.
- Pupils are prepared for life in modern Britain in addition to being ready for their move to secondary school. A strong community spirit is evident across the school because school leaders deliberately create opportunities for pupils to care for one another and for their school. Teachers share news and current affairs with pupils and, as a result, they can explain about terrorism. Pupils in Year 6 were even able to explain the difference between extremist and radical views.
- Pupils are proud of the many opportunities they have to take on positions of responsibility in the school, such as head boy and head girl and their deputies, house captains, buddies for younger pupils, school council representatives, librarians and members of the eco-council. They understand the importance of their role and are able to explain the improvements they have helped to bring about in the school.
- Pupils demonstrate financial awareness through, for example, their work in running the school tuckshop. They know about 'revenue' and 'profit' and explained the need for a 'start up fund' to help them to organise a sponsored event to raise money for charity. Members of the eco-council care for the school environment, for example by picking up litter and caring for the school pets: chickens, ducks, rabbits and guinea pigs.
- Leaders make sure pupils have a good awareness of employment opportunities in the North West region and careers involving mathematics, science and technology. Pupils enjoyed their trips to Heysham power station, the 'Big Bang' science fair and the Manchester museum of science and industry. They excitedly told the inspector about their work with BAE Systems and their challenge to design and build a container to potentially hold nuclear material.
- Pupils demonstrated their knowledge of British values through their good understanding of democratic processes. They explained how candidates for the head boy and head girl positions had to share their manifest in a speech to the whole school and staff, prior to elections taking place. Every child has a vote and voting slips are

adapted with a photograph of the candidate to help weak readers and children in the early years to choose.

- Pupils have many opportunities to join clubs in school such as the gymnastics club, 'Young Voices', baking club, Spanish and many other sporting activities. During the inspection the choir, who form the 'Young Voices', took part in a national competition in Manchester attended by over 8,000 pupils. This they thoroughly enjoyed and were immensely proud to have represented the school.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Leaders' records of behaviour show that incidents of poor behaviour are rare. The trend of no exclusions seen in recent years continues because pupils respond well to any punishments given.
- Pupils love this school and this is reflected in their above-average attendance. Very few pupils are persistently absent and school leaders work closely with these families to help them to improve their child's attendance.
- Pupils' conduct around the school was exemplary during the inspection. They are extremely well mannered and politely hold the doors for visitors. At lunchtime, pupils lined up calmly and waited for their turn to be served before sitting with their meal and chatting sociably with friends.
- Pupils are concerned about a very small number of pupils who are less considerate than others. They say that these few pupils sometimes use 'name-calling' as a way of upsetting others, and are sometimes rude and push past others waiting in line. Pupils say that sometimes these pupils are not punished in the best way because naughty pupils lose their playtime but are then allowed to play on the computers instead.
- Pupils generally have highly positive attitudes towards their learning, including in the early years. On a small number of occasions, pupils have difficulty paying attention for longer periods of time, such as when they have to listen to the teacher without being given something to do. On these occasions a few pupils become fidgety and lose interest.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- Some pupils, including the most able, have made slower progress in writing and in mathematics than they should at key stage 1 and key stage 2 over the last three years. Assessment information presented by school leaders shows that, although there is some improvement overall, pupils' attainment and progress continue to be variable across subjects and across year groups.
- Work in pupils' books and assessment information provided by school leaders indicate that this slow progress in writing is set to continue for pupils in Year 6 because leaders have not acted quickly enough or with sufficient rigour in the past to tackle the weaknesses seen in writing.
- Leaders have recently introduced new approaches to improve spelling, punctuation and grammar, and handwriting, across the school. It is too soon to see if these strategies

are making the intended improvements to pupils' progress in writing.

- Pupils in key stage 1 made slow progress in mathematics in 2016. Progress is now improving across the school as a result of much stronger teaching in mathematics, and pupils are now given more challenging work to do. Weaknesses continue with a few pupils who work with teaching assistants and other adults.
- Reading continues to be a strength of the school because the teaching of reading is highly effective, including the teaching of phonics. Pupils make good progress in their reading because they read suitably challenging books which extend their vocabulary.
- Early reading skills are taught exceptionally well and the proportion of pupils reaching the national standard in the end of Year 1 phonics check was above the national average in 2016. The very small number of pupils who were not successful in Year 1 in 2015 reached the required standard by the end of Year 2.
- The most able pupils make exceptionally strong progress in reading but, like their classmates, their progress varies in writing in some year groups. They are making better progress in mathematics because teaching is improving.
- Disadvantaged pupils are very few in number. Pupil premium funding is used well and is based on an accurate knowledge of individual pupils' needs. Differences in learning are identified and pupils are provided with targeted support to help them to catch up. As a result, progress is improving for these pupils and they make at least similar progress to their classmates, with some making better progress overall, especially in reading.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are well supported in lessons through, where necessary, additional resources planned by teachers. Pupils are fully included in all activities in the school and consequently they make similar progress to all pupils based on their starting points. Support for pupils and their families, as pupils move to secondary school, is well planned and removes anxieties which might otherwise slow progress. Additional funding that is provided for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is used effectively.
- Pupils make good progress in other subjects seen from their work in books, due to effective teaching and well-planned and engaging activities. Scientific understanding is exceptionally well developed, which leads to all pupils reaching the expected standard in key stage 1 and key stage 2. Pupils quickly learn new skills in physical education, which they enjoy immensely. Pupils' work in their topic books makes effective links between history, geography and technology and pupils are encouraged to write at length in this work.

Early years provision

Outstanding

- The senior leader, who is also the teacher of early years, has successfully built on the strengths reported at the time of the last inspection. No areas were identified as needing improvement in the early years, but the early years leader is constantly looking for ways to improve this area of the school in pursuit of excellence. Leadership of this area is a strength of the school.
- A small number of children start in Nursery each year, with these children joining pupils already in the Reception Year. Currently there are eight Nursery children who attend on

a part-time basis. These children are fully included in the wide range of activities planned for children in Reception. Nursery children settle in quickly and work alongside older children to develop their skills well as a result of effective teaching and support.

- Children typically start in the Reception Year with skills, knowledge and understanding that are broadly typical for their age overall, and in almost all areas of learning. By the time they start in Year 1 an above-average proportion of children reach the expected standard. This strong progress has been sustained for a number of years and is set to continue due to visionary leadership and highly effective teaching.
- Teaching of phonics is highly effective because the teacher, teaching assistants and other adults have received training to help them to support this area. Teaching of letter sounds continues seamlessly from the classroom to the 'wet play' area and to outside, with groups selected carefully, and matched to activities, based on children's needs.
- Children enthusiastically demonstrated their early writing skills through their mark-making in sand and with paint. Good letter recognition was seen as children searched for letters in the sand and in the water trough. Highly effective teaching supported aspects of physical development through hand and eye coordination and manipulation of small objects using fine motor skills. Children clearly enjoyed learning through their play.
- The safety and welfare of children are given a high priority. Gates and entrances are kept locked during the school day and a secure and stimulating learning environment helps children to develop their skills to a high standard and to use their imagination. Children have an older buddy who provides additional support, for example at lunchtime and playtimes, which helps children to settle in quickly and means they always have someone to help them.
- The curriculum is exceptionally well organised for children and includes a wide range of rich and imaginative activities. The early years teacher trained in using the outside area plans many creative activities for children to learn and to use their imagination such as in the wooded area, fire pit, building site and the story-telling area.
- Routines are very well established. A small group, working outside with a teaching assistant, lined up calmly as they left the classroom and sensibly put on their coats and wellies before going outside to 'hunt for things beginning with b'. They listened carefully to instructions even though they were desperate to start their treasure hunt, demonstrating high levels of self-control. As they started out, they cheerfully reminded each other not to run, showing an awareness of keeping each other safe.
- Assessments of children are accurate and based on high-quality observations of children at work and play and regular discussions that take place between the teacher and other adults supporting the children. All children continue to make exceptionally strong progress from their starting points.
- Parents are highly positive about the quality of care received by their children in the early years. They say they can easily speak to the teacher at the start or end of the school day if they have any concerns or just to find out about how their children have got on that day.

School details

Unique reference number	112299
Local authority	Cumbria
Inspection number	10024324

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	141
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Ray Browne
Headteacher	Sue Little
Telephone number	01229 588708
Website	www.low-furness-primary-school.co.uk
Email address	head@low-furness.cumbria.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	26 February 2013

Information about this school

- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website, following several amendments made during the inspection.
- The school is smaller than the average school. The number of pupils in each year group varies widely from 12 to 21. Nursery children attend part time for up to 15 hours per week. Nursery and Reception children are taught together in the early years classroom, with other years arranged in three mixed-age classes.
- A very small number of pupils are disadvantaged and there is a similarly small number of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. Both groups are well below average compared with those in other schools and there are no children from these groups in the early years, continuing a trend seen in recent years.
- Almost all pupils are of White British heritage and no pupils speak English as an additional language.

- The school meets the government's floor standards in 2016. These are the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 6.
- The school provides a breakfast club and after-school club on the school site.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed teaching and learning in lessons and made short visits to classes. All classes were seen during the inspection, including the early years. There were observations of learning in intervention groups. Pupils' work in books was checked and inspectors heard pupils read aloud.
- Meetings were held with senior and other leaders, the chair of the governing body and two other governors, and a telephone conversation was held with a representative from the local authority. Reports from external reviews of the school were scrutinised.
- The inspector met with a group of parents when they collected their children at the end of the day. The views of parents who responded to Ofsted's online survey were also considered.
- The views of staff were gathered during a formal meeting and other views were also taken into consideration from those who completed Ofsted's staff survey.
- Behaviour of pupils was observed at playtime and lunchtime, during pupils' arrival at school at the start of the day and during breakfast club activities. A separate formal meeting was held with pupils from the school council to find out their views on the school.
- A wide range of other documentation was also considered, including information available on the school website and information on pupils' achievements, attendance and behaviour. The school's self-evaluation summary and action plan were examined, along with records on the school's arrangements for keeping pupils safe.

Inspection team

Denah Jones, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

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