

Black Combe Junior School

Moor Road, Millom, Cumbria LA18 5DT

Inspection dates

15–16 January 2019

Overall effectiveness	Good
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The teaching of reading has greatly improved because of strategies that leaders have introduced. However, some pupils do not make good progress.
- Most pupils make good progress in a range of other subjects, including writing and mathematics.
- The curriculum is broad and interesting. It makes a strong contribution to pupils' development.
- Pupils who are disadvantaged or who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) make good progress from their different starting points.
- Parents and carers are very happy with the quality of education the school provides.
- Governors have a secure grasp of the school's strengths and areas for development. They are effective in holding leaders to account.
- Teachers typically have strong subject knowledge and plan engaging lessons.
- Pupils feel safe in the school. They know how to keep themselves safe when they are using the internet.
- Leaders have created a warm and inviting learning environment, which is well maintained.
- Pupils typically show good conduct around the school, which contributes well to an orderly environment.
- In leaders' plans for improvement, the intended impact of their actions is sometimes not clearly linked to pupils' outcomes in a measurable way.
- Leaders have not fully implemented their recently refined assessment processes.
- Occasionally, teachers do not provide work that challenges the most able in writing.
- The school's website is currently out of action and therefore contains none of the required information.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Strengthen leadership and management by:
 - ensuring that, in their action plans for improvement, leaders are clear about the intended impact of their actions on pupils' outcomes
 - continuing to refine leaders' assessment processes to obtain a clearer overview of pupils' progress
 - ensuring that the school's website is compliant with the government's guidelines and remains so.
- Develop existing strategies further to strengthen pupils' progress in reading.
- Provide work that is more consistently challenging for the most able in writing.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The headteacher and her senior leadership team have a clear understanding of the quality of education the school provides. Leaders have successfully reversed a recent dip in progress in reading at the end of Year 6. As a result, most current pupils are making good progress in reading, with several making very strong progress. However, there are still a few pupils whose progress is not strong enough. Leaders have also ensured that pupils make good progress in writing, mathematics and a range of other subjects.
- A member of the senior leadership team has stepped into the role of acting headteacher during the unavoidable absence of the headteacher. He and the rest of the senior leaders have continued to maintain good standards in the short time they have been in charge.
- Leaders have analysed pupils' performance effectively and have devised plans for school improvement that identify suitable actions, responsible staff and realistic time frames. Their actions include continuing to strengthen teaching and refining assessment procedures. Sometimes, however, leaders do not relate the intended impact of their actions to pupils' achievement and development in a measurable way.
- Leaders have also accurately evaluated the effectiveness of the school. Although they are clear about identifying their next steps for development, they are less precise in evaluating the effectiveness of actions they have already taken.
- Leaders have brought in effective strategies to strengthen most pupils' progress in reading. These include a systematic use of the school's library to encourage pupils to read. There is also a new expectation that pupils will read at home frequently. Leaders now encourage parents to support this through better communication, such as the use of a home-school reading record book. Leaders also make more focused use of teaching assistants to provide more structured support for pupils who are less confident with their reading.
- Subject leaders in English and mathematics have a secure understanding of standards in their subject. They carry out checks on the quality of teaching and learning and feed back their findings to members of staff, so that they can strengthen their practice. They now use strategies, such as moderation of work, to ensure that teachers have a strong grasp of expectations of pupils and are able to identify pupils' gaps in learning more readily. These actions contribute to the good progress most current pupils make.
- Leaders of subjects other than English and mathematics are effective and competent. They check the quality of education provided by, for instance, analysing work and observing lessons. They use the information they gather from these activities to suggest areas for development for staff and to plan actions for further improvement. Although leaders have a good overview of the standards of attainment in most subjects, in religious education (RE) the overview is less clear. There are already plans in place to address this.
- The school's environment is well maintained and inviting. Leaders use it to celebrate the breadth of the curriculum and pupils' achievements, which contributes effectively to

developing pupils' self-esteem. For example, there are displays of the good work pupils do in their science, technology, engineering and mathematics programme, which is a feature of the school's curriculum.

- The curriculum is broad and balanced. It has a clear intent and contributes well to pupils' overall development. Leaders enhance it with a wide range of other activities that provide pupils with opportunities and experiences they might not otherwise enjoy. They support pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development effectively. Leaders also provide pupils with opportunities to develop a good understanding of fundamental British values and equalities through a variety of activities. These include assemblies, visits from speakers and lessons in RE and personal, social and health education. Pupils develop a sense of responsibility in their roles as school councillors and by raising money for various charities.
- Leaders make effective use of the pupil premium funding. Current pupils benefit from well-targeted support for both their academic and emotional needs. This includes extra sessions in English and mathematics and subsidised trips to places of educational interest, such as museums. These activities contribute well to the good progress these pupils make across a range of subjects.
- Leaders use the primary school physical education and sport funding effectively. They provide pupils with opportunities to take part in interesting sports, such as archery, and arrange for them to take part in various sports competitions against other schools. They also commission coaches to work with pupils alongside members of staff. This enables staff to develop their own skills in teaching physical education.
- Pupils who have SEND progress well. Leaders make effective use of funding to provide appropriate support. This includes the careful deployment of teaching assistants to support pupils' learning needs in English and mathematics. Leaders carry out thorough evaluations of the impact of the activities that they provide to ensure their continued effectiveness.
- Leaders have effective assessment procedures in place. They have recently reviewed their process of analysing assessment information to sharpen their understanding of how to make further improvements to teaching and learning. For example, they now identify gaps in pupils' learning more effectively and develop strategies to address them. However, this new approach is not yet fully in place.
- Staff are very positive about their work in the school. They said that senior leaders do all they can to manage the staff's workload and provide useful training that improves their professional performance. Morale is high.
- Parents who spoke to the inspector or responded to Parent View, Ofsted's online survey, were unanimous in their praise for the school. They said that the school feels 'like a family' and that staff look after their children well. They are happy with the progress that their children make. They also appreciate the range of activities, such as visits and clubs, that the school provides to enhance their children's education.
- The local authority has an accurate appreciation of the quality of education provided by the school. It provides an appropriate level of support and has confidence in the abilities of the headteacher and her leadership team.

Governance of the school

- Governors have a secure understanding of standards in the school. They receive detailed information from senior leaders. Minutes of meetings confirm that governors ask searching questions about a wide range of matters, including finance and pupils' performance. They are effective in holding leaders to account and ensuring that leaders secure good progress for pupils of the school.
- Governors have a useful range of skills that help them to carry out their roles effectively. For example, knowledge of early-help processes contributes well to their understanding of safeguarding matters. They have also received appropriate training, including in safer recruitment. They receive regular updates from school leaders about issues concerning child protection, which keep them well informed. Consequently, they ensure that safeguarding in the school is effective.
- The school's website was out of action during the inspection. As a result, the required information was not available to view. Governors are aware of this and are in the process of rectifying matters.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- There is a strong culture of safeguarding in the school. Leaders ensure that staff are well trained in this area. Staff know the signs of abuse and what to do if they have concerns about a pupil. They know their pupils well and are alert to any changes in their behaviour or demeanour.
- Leaders keep detailed records of concerns, including outcomes of any actions regarding child protection issues. Members of staff and the designated lead for safeguarding keep a close watch on pupils. Records show that leaders have the safety of the pupil at heart by, for example, insisting on external agencies retaining current support levels for specific pupils if they have a concern.
- The school's required record of checks on members of staff is thorough and complies with the government's guidance. The school's safeguarding policy is current and comprehensive and is consistent with the government's most recent advice.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Leaders have taken effective action to secure stronger teaching in reading, following the dip in performance at the end of Year 6 in 2018. There is now a greater emphasis on developing specific reading skills, such as inference. There is also more time dedicated to reading activities than last year. Assessment is now more sharply focused on identifying gaps in learning, and the least able receive better-targeted support from teaching assistants. These actions have contributed effectively to the good quality of teaching that is now evident in reading. As a result, most current pupils make good progress, although some pupils' progress is still not strong enough.
- Teaching in mathematics and other subjects is also good. In the large majority of cases, teachers use their strong subject knowledge to plan interesting lessons that sustain pupils' attention well. For example, in mathematics in Year 5, most-able pupils

make effective use of their prior knowledge of time to solve more complex problems. However, there are a few times when the work does not quite match the needs of pupils, which results in an occasional lack of concentration and disengagement from the task.

- Teachers make effective use of teaching assistants. For example, they deploy them to support the least able and those who have SEND. Their work makes a positive contribution to the good progress made by this group of pupils.
- Staff typically question pupils effectively. They encourage pupils to think for themselves, referring to knowledge they already have to guide them to the correct solution or response. They mostly use assessment effectively to identify gaps in pupils' learning and they adjust the teaching to provide the right support for pupils who need it.
- Teachers have high expectations of pupils' behaviour and work. They maintain warm and positive relationships with their pupils, which ensures a constructive working environment in each class. Staff typically manage pupils' behaviour effectively, which helps them to make the most of the learning time available.
- Teachers make effective use of the school's resources to enhance pupils' learning. For example, they use computer technology to create images on a large, horizontal screen to stimulate pupils' imagination to help them in their writing. This contributes well to the good progress that most current pupils make in this subject.
- Pupils have several opportunities to make effective use of the skills that they learn in English and mathematics in other subjects. For example, they use mathematical skills when measuring in science and writing skills in completing descriptions of the features of Antarctica in geography.
- Teachers usually provide suitably challenging work for the most able pupils, especially in mathematics. Occasionally, however, the work that most-able pupils complete in writing does not contain opportunities to deepen their learning. This is sometimes because the work is organised in such a way that pupils are unable to make their own decisions about the content and structure of the work.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils feel safe in the school because they know that staff do all that they can to keep them safe. Pupils also know how to avoid danger in a range of situations. For example, they spoke confidently about how to stay free from harm when using the internet and knew about the filters and blocks that leaders have set up on the school's computer system. They also said that they receive advice on being careful on the road or near the railway, which is close by.
- Pupils understand that members of staff are always available to listen and act if they have any worries. They readily use the phrase 'trusted adults' in this connection, which is the language that staff use in giving pupils important messages about supporting their well-being in school.

- Pupils enjoy a wide range of activities that support their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development effectively, as well as their health and physical development. For instance, they take part in visits to museums and in residential trips where they can experience adventurous activities. Sporting events are plentiful, and pupils' health benefits from participating in football competitions or archery sessions.
- Pupils reported that there is no bullying and there are no examples of racist or homophobic language. They said that adults are quick to respond if pupils fall out and that they manage incidents effectively.
- Pupils learn tolerance and respect through, for example, lessons in personal, social and health education. They find out about a range of faiths through lessons in religious education. They enjoy presentations from members of different Christian traditions and have visited a Buddhist temple. However, their experience of, for example, the Islamic faith through visits or guest speakers is less well developed.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils show typically good conduct around the school, and the environment is orderly. Although the vast majority of pupils behave well in class, a few occasionally show a lack of self-discipline and disengage from their work.
- Pupils play sociably with each other in the playground, and relationships are positive. The playground is spacious and has a range of interesting activities and resources available, such as climbing frames and spaces to play ball games. Pupils make the most of their breaktimes and enjoy the facilities available to them.
- Pupils' attendance is broadly in line with the most recent national average. There are currently no persistent absences. Leaders' strategies, including rewards for pupils and early communication with parents of absentees, have contributed effectively to this.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Assessment information for Year 6 in 2018 showed a dip in progress in reading. Leaders' actions to strengthen teaching have ensured that most current pupils are making greatly improved progress in this subject. The progress of most current pupils is good. In some cases, for example in upper key stage 2, the progress of current pupils is very strong. Teachers now more effectively target gaps in pupils' knowledge, such as inference skills, and successfully address them. However, there are still some pupils whose progress is not as strong as it could be.
- The majority of current pupils make good progress across a range of subjects, including mathematics and English. They are successfully acquiring the knowledge, skills and understanding to prepare them for the next stage in their education. Most-able pupils usually do work that challenges them effectively, particularly in mathematics, but this is less consistently the case in writing. The proportion of pupils who reached the higher standard in 2018 rose compared to the previous year, but was still below the national average.
- Despite the dip in reading progress in 2018, published results showed that the progress of disadvantaged pupils in reading and writing was in line with that of other pupils

nationally. Progress in mathematics was slightly below the average but average attainment was above the expected standard. The progress of current pupils who are disadvantaged is good. Evidence from pupils' work and assessment information show that they acquire knowledge and skills well in reading, writing and mathematics. Leaders support them effectively, by providing activities such as extra sessions in English and mathematics for individuals and groups.

- Pupils who have SEND are making good progress from their starting points. Leaders organise helpful activities to support their development. These include more focused use of teaching assistants to provide, for example, programmes to improve reading.
- The majority of pupils read with fluency and comprehension skills that are appropriate to their age and ability. Most-able pupils read with verve and excellent use of intonation to convey understanding of the text. They also demonstrate the ability to infer meaning and characters' motives for their actions. Least-able pupils mostly use their knowledge of phonics well to read unfamiliar words. Pupils said they enjoy reading and have experience of a range of genres, including fiction and non-fiction.
- Pupils make good progress in subjects other than English and mathematics. They acquire knowledge and skills well and in a systematic way. For example, they can explain forces in science and they find out about the history of the local area. They make good use of their computing skills to create documents related to a range of subjects. They use their science and their design and technology skills effectively to design and build working model cars.

School details

Unique reference number	112160
Local authority	Cumbria
Inspection number	10042473

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

Type of school	Junior
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	7 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	95
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Denise Burness
Headteacher	Catherine Dennison
Acting Headteacher	Mark Redhead
Telephone number	01229 772862
Website	www.blackcombe.cumbria.sch.uk
Email address	admin@blackcombe.cumbria.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	7–8 May 2014

Information about this school

- Black Combe Junior School is smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- The proportion of pupils who come from minority ethnic backgrounds is below the national average.
- The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is below the national average.
- The proportion of pupils who receive support for SEND is above the national average.
- The proportion of pupils who have an education, health and care plan is above the national average.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for support through the pupil premium funding is above the national average.

- The headteacher is temporarily absent from the school. A member of the senior-leadership team has taken on the role of acting headteacher until the headteacher returns.
- A breakfast club and an after-school club are provided on site. These are managed by the school and were part of this inspection.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector carried out observations of learning in all year groups. These were joint observations with the acting headteacher. The acting headteacher was present at inspection team meetings.
- A range of documentation was scrutinised, including: the school's self-evaluation summary, action plans for school improvement, records of the monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning, assessment information, minutes of meetings of the governing body and records connected with the safeguarding of children.
- The inspector had discussions with: the acting headteacher, senior leaders, subject leaders, other members of staff, the chair and other members of the governing body, representatives of the local authority, parents and pupils. The inspector also had a discussion on the telephone with the substantive headteacher, at her request.
- The inspector listened to pupils read and analysed pupils' work in a range of subjects.
- The inspector evaluated eight responses received through Parent View, Ofsted's online survey, during the inspection. He also analysed eight responses to the staff survey.

Inspection team

Mark Quinn, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

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In the report, 'disadvantaged pupils' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route. www.gov.uk/pupil-premium-information-for-schools-and-alternative-provision-settings.

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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