



# Blennerhasset School

## Inspection Report

**Unique Reference Number** 112104  
**LEA** Cumbria  
**Inspection number** 278849  
**Inspection dates** 16 March 2006 to 16 March 2006  
**Reporting inspector** Mr Anthony Calderbank

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Primary	<b>School address</b>	Blennerhasset
<b>School category</b>	Community		Wigton
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3 to 11		Cumbria, CA7 3RL
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed	<b>Telephone number</b>	01697 320677
<b>Number on roll</b>	43	<b>Fax number</b>	01697 320677
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body	<b>Chair of governors</b>	Mr Geoff Bremner
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	1 February 2000	<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs Allyson Stevenson

<b>Age group</b> 3 to 11	<b>Inspection dates</b> 16 March 2006 - 16 March 2006	<b>Inspection number</b> 278849
-----------------------------	---	------------------------------------

---

© Crown copyright 2006

Website: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

## **Introduction**

The inspection was carried out by an additional inspector.

## **Description of the school**

Blennerhasset is a very small rural primary school in Cumbria. The children come from a wide range of social and economic backgrounds. A below average proportion of children are in receipt of free school meals. Attainment on entry to the school is generally below average. All children are of white British heritage. The proportion of children identified as having learning difficulties and/or disabilities is similar to that found in most schools.

## **Key for inspection grades**

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 3

Blennerhasset School provides a satisfactory standard of education. Strengths are its care for all children, their very positive attitudes and very good behaviour. Most parents are satisfied with the school and there are good links with other village schools and the local community.

Standards on entry vary, because of the very small number of pupils, but are generally below average. Children make good progress in the Foundation Stage but do not achieve as well in their social and language development as they do in the other areas of learning. Overall, satisfactory progress is made throughout the rest of the school because of sound teaching. Standards by the end of Year 6 are broadly average. Children's reading is good throughout the school but writing skills are limited. Children are keen to improve their work but are not clear about the next step they need to take.

The curriculum, including the provision for children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, is good. The leadership of the headteacher is good. The school has made good progress since her appointment. The leadership and management provided by staff and governors are satisfactory. The school improvement plan is satisfactory, although criteria for measuring success are not precise.

The ability to bring about further improvement is good. Funding has been used well since the last inspection to make significant improvements. The school provides satisfactory value for money.

### What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards in writing and extend the opportunities to write in other subjects.
- Make sure that the school improvement plan includes precise and detailed measures of success.
- Ensure that children have a clear understanding of how well they are doing and what they need to do next to improve their work.

## Achievement and standards

### Grade: 3

By the end of Year 6, standards are broadly average in English, mathematics and science and achievement is satisfactory. Children start school with below average attainment. By the time they enter Year 1 they have made good progress overall so that the majority of children achieve most of the early learning goals. However, achievement in social and language development is not as good as in other areas. In Years 1 and 2, children make good progress and achieve well in reading and mathematics and satisfactorily in writing.

In Years 3, 4 and 5, children make good progress and standards in English, mathematics and science are well placed to continue to improve further. The school has rightly

identified writing as a weakness throughout the school. Children's progress in writing has not been as good as it should be and the school is aware of the need to ensure that key skills are developed consistently throughout the school.

Children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are supported well and make good progress.

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 2**

The school judges this aspect to be satisfactory. Inspection evidence finds that it is good. Children behave very well and their attitudes to learning are good. They enjoy school life and learning. Attendance is similar to that found in most schools. By Year 6, children are confident and eager learners. Very good relationships, leading to mutual trust and confidence, reflect a strong family ethos. Children's personal development is enhanced by working alongside pupils from other small schools. Children recognise their responsibilities as citizens and members of their community; for example, they personally invite the senior citizens in the village to school functions. Children take responsibility for tasks that contribute to the smooth running of the school; for example, helping out at lunchtime and tidying the shed. They learn how to keep safe and to follow a healthy lifestyle.

Children's spiritual, moral and social development is good overall. They regularly raise money for charities in support of those less fortunate than themselves and have a very good understanding of right and wrong. Children's knowledge and understanding of their own culture is promoted well, but more could be done to prepare them for life in our multi-cultural society.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 3**

Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall with some strengths. Practical approaches, introduced in the Foundation Stage, ensure good learning because children enjoy themselves. The use of specialist staff in music and physical education is having a positive impact upon standards. Planning is effective, providing appropriately for the mixed age classes and children's different abilities. In a mathematics class containing children from Year 3 to Year 6, the teacher carefully directed and pitched her questions ensuring all children were suitably challenged. Children are given good opportunities to talk about their work. This helps to improve their speaking and listening skills, as well as their understanding of the subject. The teaching of reading and mathematics is better than the teaching of writing and this is reflected in the standards and progress made by the children. Expectations with regards to handwriting and the presentation of work are still not high enough.

Good use is being made of assessment information in English, with the exception of writing, and in mathematics to track pupils' progress and identify gaps in provision.

The new assessment system for science is not yet being used effectively in planning work to match children's ability.

Skilful teaching assistants are used well. The support provided for children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is effective and ensures that they make good progress.

## **Curriculum and other activities**

### **Grade: 2**

The school judges its curriculum as being satisfactory. Inspection evidence finds that it is good overall. The curriculum meets statutory requirements and includes sex, drugs and health education. Clear information about keeping safe and healthy and accepting responsibility is helping children to become mature, young citizens. Opportunities for children to consolidate their writing skills in other subjects are limited. The curriculum is enriched well through visits and visitors to school, a residential outdoor education visit and a range of school clubs. These are well attended by children and are very effective in fostering their interest in and commitment to learning. Children spoke enthusiastically about the gardening club and how they grew and cooked their own vegetables. Spinach was a favourite! The curriculum in the Foundation Stage is satisfactory, although there is no suitably designated outdoor play area.

Provision for children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is good. Individual education plans provide clear targets for learning which, with good adult support, enable them to achieve well.

Good opportunities exist to extend learning through effective links with other small schools. This partnership increases the opportunities for children to take part in curriculum enrichment activities. It also helps to prepare children for transfer to secondary school.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 2**

The school's care and support of pupils is good. The school judged its provision as satisfactory. This is a happy school with a friendly atmosphere and is liked by both pupils and most parents. The very small classes help staff to get to know and understand the needs of each pupil. Children say that they feel safe and secure in school and that staff are kind and helpful. They report that bullying is not an issue. Provision for children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is good. Individuals who need extra help are quickly identified and supported well. Parents are kept fully informed about their children's individual education plans and their progress. There is good liaison with external support agencies. Effective child protection procedures are in place and are clearly understood by all staff. Good attention is paid to health and safety issues.

Whole school systems for assessing pupils' attainment and tracking their progress are effective in English and mathematics. Children are now being provided with targets but they are not always clear about what to do next to improve their work.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 3**

The leadership and management of the school are satisfactory, but recent changes have brought about some good developments. Since her appointment two years ago, the headteacher has successfully managed a difficult period of transition in the school. She has introduced many changes which are addressing areas of weakness and improving standards; for example, improved assessment and tracking procedures to plug gaps in the knowledge and understanding of pupils in Years 3 to 6. The role of the governing body has improved since the last inspection. They now fulfil their statutory duties and are satisfactorily involved in school development issues. There is a strong team approach between the headteacher, governors and all staff. The school has entered into an agreement with some other local small schools to provide support through joint working and to improve the effectiveness of provision, such as for special educational needs. The school has a satisfactory range of systems in place to monitor its work but subject leaders could be more involved in managing their areas. The school improvement plan is satisfactory. It identifies the weaknesses that need addressing but does not include clear and detailed success criteria. Progress towards achieving priorities is not measured accurately. However, the school is well placed to move forward.

**Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaints about school inspection', which is available from Ofsted's website: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk).**



## Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	<b>School Overall</b>	<b>16-19</b>
--	-----------------------	--------------

### Overall effectiveness

<b>How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?</b>	3	NA
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2	NA
The quality and standards in foundation stage	2	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3	NA
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	Yes	NA
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	NA

### Achievement and standards

<b>How well do learners achieve?</b>	3	NA
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	3	NA
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3	NA
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2	NA

### Personal development and well-being

<b>How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	2	NA
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2	NA
The behaviour of learners	2	NA
The attendance of learners	3	NA
How well learners enjoy their education	2	NA
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	NA
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2	NA
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2	NA
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3	NA

### The quality of provision

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?</b>	3	NA
<b>How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?</b>	2	NA
<b>How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?</b>	2	NA

<sup>1</sup> Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

**Leadership and management**

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	3	NA
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3	NA
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	3	NA
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2	NA
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	3	NA
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3	NA
The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected	Yes	NA

<b>The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy</b>	
Learners are encouraged and enabled to eat and drink healthily	Yes
Learners are encouraged and enabled to take regular exercise	Yes
Learners are discouraged from smoking and substance abuse	Yes
Learners are educated about sexual health	Yes
<b>The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe</b>	
Procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements	Yes
Risk assessment procedures and related staff training are in place	Yes
Action is taken to reduce anti-social behaviour, such as bullying and racism	Yes
Learners are taught about key risks and how to deal with them	Yes
<b>The extent to which learners make a positive contribution</b>	
Learners are helped to develop stable, positive relationships	Yes
Learners, individually and collectively, participate in making decisions that affect them	Yes
Learners are encouraged to initiate, participate in and manage activities in school and the wider community	Yes
<b>The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being</b>	
There is provision to promote learners' basic skills	Yes
Learners have opportunities to develop enterprise skills and work in teams	Yes
Careers education and guidance is provided to all learners in key stage 3 and 4 and the sixth form	NA
Education for all learners aged 14–19 provides an understanding of employment and the economy	NA

## Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Alexandra House

33 Kingsway

London

WC2B 6SE

T 0207 421 6800

F 0207 421 6707

Ofsted helpline

08456 404045

The Children

Blennerhasset School

Blennerhasset

Wigton

Cumbria

CA7 3RL

17 March 2006

Dear Children

Thank you very much for making me so welcome in your school. I enjoyed talking to you and seeing your lessons. I am particularly grateful to those of you who came to tell me about the work you do and what you think of your school. I was very surprised to learn that your favourite vegetable was spinach! I was pleased that your school came first in the Book Quiz. Well done!

This is what I liked most about your school:

it has a real family feel and everybody gets on well together

your behaviour is very good and you try hard

you are good readers and enjoy books

all the adults in the school look after you really well

your headteacher has got lots of energy and ideas and she is very good at finding out what people think and making things better.

To make things even better, this is what I have asked your school to do now:

show you how to improve your writing

make sure that the plans to make the school better are clear about the action that needs to be taken

ensure that you know what to do next in order to improve your work.

I feel sure that Mrs Stevenson, the teachers, and the governors will carry on working hard to make your school better still. Do keep on working hard and enjoying school.

Yours faithfully

Tony Calderbank

Lead Inspector