



Grasslot Infant School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 112132
LEA Cumbria
Inspection number 278856
Inspection dates 12 December 2005 to 13 December 2005
Reporting inspector Mr Eric Jackson

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

Type of school	Infant	School address	Grasslot
School category	Community		Maryport
Age range of pupils	3 to 7		Cumbria, CA15 8BT
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01900 812268
Number on roll	72	Fax number	01900 812268
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mrs Joanne Ford
Date of previous inspection	1 November 1999	Headteacher	Mrs Frances Dugan

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

The school is housed in a recently well-improved building, with new classrooms and community sports and arts facilities. It caters for children from three to seven years old and there are 72 on roll. The area is socio-economically disadvantaged. A higher than average proportion of children is eligible for free school meals. Attainment at entry is below average overall. All the children are white British. A higher than average proportion of the children has learning difficulties. The school is part of a local Excellence Cluster, and has earned many awards for the quality of its work.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

Grasslot Infants is an outstanding school, a higher judgement than the school's cautious view of itself. Children and their parents say, "It is fantastic," and the inspection findings confirm this. It has a deserved high reputation locally. The school is well funded, and gives excellent value for money. Very good improvements have been made since the last inspection and there is considerable capacity to continue to improve.

The headteacher's leadership is enthusiastic and inspirational, guiding a relatively inexperienced staff to perform very well. Provision in the Foundation Stage is outstanding and children reach levels close to those expected nationally in most areas of learning by the end of the reception year. There have been excellent improvements in reading, writing and mathematics over the last five years so that standards are now above the national average by the end of Year 2. Teaching and learning are outstanding. Lessons are consistently good and often excellent, leading to very good progress in learning for the children. Children's achievement is outstanding overall. Handwriting is satisfactory, and is a development priority for the schools in the local Excellence Cluster. Children's personal development is excellent so that their confidence and self-esteem flourish. The school's self-evaluation is good, thorough and effective. Improvement plans focus on the key priorities identified. Staff training is focused very effectively on these key areas. For example, recent plans to improve children's problem-solving skills in mathematics have already produced good results. However, the staff have not yet considered sufficiently how to develop a wider range of skills across all areas of learning. Partnership with parents, the community and other agencies is excellent and has a powerful influence on the quality of education and the high ethos for learning.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise the quality of children's handwriting to match their reading and writing achievement;
- In reviewing and remodelling the curriculum, consider how the development of key skills can best be effected across the subjects.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

Attainment at entry is below average, and often well below average in language and personal and social development. Progress is very good in the nursery and reception classes so that children reach levels close to those expected in most areas of learning by the time they enter Year 1. They make excellent progress in their personal, social and emotional development. They make very good progress in communication and language skills, but these are still below average by age five.

Standards are above average in reading, writing, mathematics and science by the end of Year 2, exceeding challenging targets. Children also achieve well in other subjects,

especially in information communication technology (ICT), art and design and music. Progress and achievement are excellent in Years 1 and 2 because the teaching and support are of very high quality, focused directly on individual children's needs. Vulnerable children and those with learning difficulties make very good progress towards targets set for them.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Provision for children's personal development and well-being are excellent, a maintained strength, and they make impressive progress in their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The school's determination to make every child and their parents or carers feel special leads to all children having full access to the same rich quality of education.

Children's attitudes to learning and their behaviour are outstanding: the joyous feeling throughout the school leading to the Christmas celebrations was a constant hum of pleasurable activity. In a very good Year 1 and 2 concert practice, two excellent six-year-old soloists typified the confidence and achievement promoted in the children by the staff. The above average attendance testifies to how much the children enjoy their school. The School Council spoke for all when they said that the staff make learning interesting and exciting for them. Children are safe and secure, verified by parents, but the school is still open and inviting.

The staff have embraced enthusiastically the national drive to promote healthy living for children. Every morning the whole school, from nursery children to the headteacher, takes part in a ten minute 'Wake and Shake' session in the hall, an aerobic prelude to the lively day to follow. The children really enjoy this, as do Year 1 and 2 children as School Councillors, or as playground and lunchtime Buddies. Their contribution to the school community is strong, and there are very good links with the local community through the playgroup, and use of the sports hall. Children also begin to develop well the skills that will equip them for the later world of work in paired and group work, and the development of literacy, numeracy and ICT skills.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 1

Teaching is excellent, leading to fast progress in most areas of learning. As one parent wrote, "the staff use various teaching methods to adapt to the needs of the individual". There is a higher than average ratio of adults to children and the staff ensure that this benefits the children very effectively. For example, children in the nursery and reception classes plan their activities in small groups with their lead adult in the morning and the afternoon. The staff maintain very good assessment records of these children's progress, and keep their parents or carers fully informed.

The key to the high quality of education is in the promotion by all staff, led by the headteacher, of excellent working relationships with the parents or carers and their children. One parent wrote, "They look after everybody well, even the parents". This link with home is paramount in the learning relationships with the school, begun very well during pre-school visits from nursery staff. The staff's lively enthusiasm, coupled with rigorous planning of well-targeted learning activities for the children, builds superbly on this partnership.

A Learning Mentor, financed through the Excellence Cluster, works with many of the vulnerable children, and those with learning difficulties, individually or in small groups. Her intervention is very skilled, and complements very effectively the rest of the high quality teaching these children receive.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is good with some very good features. All the required areas of learning are very effectively planned for the nursery and reception children. English, mathematics and science are covered very well in Years 1 and 2, but there is also rich provision in all the other required aspects. Through a wide range of visits in the locality and visitors to the school, and good extra-curricular activities, the children receive good quality learning opportunities. Good progress has been made by the staff in planning more effective problem-solving activities in mathematics. They have not yet extended this idea to the promotion of other key skills, such as investigation or observation, to other areas of learning.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Care, guidance and support are excellent. Parents are rightly full of praise for the staff's commitment to their children's safety and well-being. The staff also monitor children's development in all areas of learning very effectively. This is a school that truly knows its children. Provision in this area for vulnerable children is excellent, as it is for those with learning difficulties, or identified with special talents. The staff are developing ways to help children understand how to assess their own learning. Year 2 children record their own views of what they have achieved daily in a personal notebook. The wide array of learning recorded in these over two months, from sea safety, and how to make a circuit go dimmer, to learning to be an actor, is testament to the overall high quality of the school's provision for children's learning.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

Leadership and management are excellent, and governance is good. The atmosphere for learning promoted by the staff is exceptional, impressively led by the headteacher. This has promoted outstanding achievement for the children in most areas of learning. The headteacher is vigilant in making sure that all children receive the support they

need to help them to improve. The school also consults parents and children regularly and acts on their views.

Recently, the school has had to cope with staffing problems and severe disruption from building works, and has done so with no perceptible detriment to the quality of education or children's progress. The staff are both enthusiastic and professionally skilled. Constant communication between them ensures a rich flow of information and ideas, monitored and channelled very well by the headteacher. Provision in the nursery and reception classes is outstanding.

The monitoring and evaluation of the school's work is good, identifying almost all strengths and weaknesses accurately. Subsequent improvement planning is specific and effective. The school's resources are used very effectively. For example, a new classroom only handed over for use one week before the inspection was a fully equipped, high quality Year 1 learning environment during the inspection. The school adaptations, including the impressive art and sports section, with remote-controlled movable seating for 120 people, have been skilfully designed to make the best use of the space and other facilities. The partnership with the local authority and the Excellence Cluster has also been influential in driving improvement and raising standards in the school.

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Inspection judgements

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

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	1	NA
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1	NA
The quality and standards in foundation stage	1	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2	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

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

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1	NA
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1	NA
The behaviour of learners	1	NA
The attendance of learners	2	NA
How well learners enjoy their education	1	NA
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1	NA
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1	NA
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1	NA
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2	NA

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	1	NA
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2	NA
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1	NA

¹ 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

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	1	NA
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1	NA
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	2	NA
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1	NA
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	1	NA
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2	NA
The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected	Yes	NA

The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy	
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
The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe	
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
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution	
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
The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being	
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

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Grasslot Infant School

Grasslot

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14 December 2005

Dear Children

Thank you for looking after me when I visited your school. I really enjoyed being there, and joining in with many of your Christmas celebrations. You know how to have a good time at Grasslot Infants!

You know that I came to see how well your school helps you to learn, and how well it looks after you. You and your parents told me that it is a fantastic school that cares for you and helps you to learn very well. I agree with you. You also told me that the staff are always there to help you when you need it, and that they make learning interesting and fun. I saw that for myself with all the many exciting things you did. Nursery and reception put on a lovely concert for parents and friends in your posh new hall – those roll-out seats are good! Those of you in Years 1 and 2 went to the pictures, played tennis, also put on a very good concert, and you all had a tasty Christmas lunch as well. Thank you for giving me the jokes from the crackers – I will make my friends groan when I tell the jokes this Christmas in Manchester. Here's one: what do you say when you meet a great big polar bear? You don't say anything, you run away fast! (I said that they'd make you groan.)

I have asked the staff to help you to improve your handwriting – you could help by being very careful to form your letters and keep your writing neat. I have also asked them to help you use some of the things you learn in literacy, numeracy and ICT more in all your learning. You are already very good learners, so this should be easy for you.

Thank you again for being so friendly and I wish you and all your friends and family a happy new year.

Best wishes

Mr Eric Jackson

Lead Inspector