



Lowca Community School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 112158
LEA Cumbria
Inspection number 278865
Inspection dates 19 October 2005 to 20 October 2005
Reporting inspector Carole Cressey

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Lowca
School category	Community		Whitehaven
Age range of pupils	4 to 11		Cumbria, CA28 6QS
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01946 852656
Number on roll	63	Fax number	
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mr Hubert Donnan
Date of previous inspection	1 December 2000	Headteacher	Mrs Sharon Allgood

Age group 4 to 11	Inspection dates 19 October 2005 - 20 October 2005	Inspection number 278865
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one additional inspector.

Description of the school

Lowca Community School serves an isolated ex-mining community on the coast of West Cumbria. It is much smaller than most primary schools and has 63 full-time pupils aged from 4 to 11 years old. Each of its two classes provides for three or four year groups.

The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is above the national average because of pockets of considerable disadvantage in the Lowca community. These are reflected in the behaviour and attitudes of some of the pupils and in the lower than average skills children have when they first arrive in school. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is above the national average. The school has experienced much turbulence in the last few years. However, it is now experiencing a settled period, with a new and enthusiastic headteacher and a bright modern building.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a good and strongly improving school that provides good value for money. The parents are very confident that their children are safe and well cared for, work hard and do well. The quality of the education, including teaching, is good in all classes, not least the Reception Year. As a result, pupils make good progress and achieve well. Personal development is very good. Pupils are becoming much better behaved and are learning to be responsible members of their school community. They enjoy their lessons very much, but would like more after school clubs. The school is well led and managed. The headteacher's infectious enthusiasm and optimism in the face of a great many problems have brought in improvements to all aspects of the school, most notably to pupils' progress and their attitudes to learning.

This is a forward-looking school which knows its strengths and weaknesses very well. It is aware that progress for those pupils who learn at a faster rate could be better, and that there are gaps in pupils' understanding of the different cultures found in our towns and cities. Lowca is a school that its pupils, parents and governors are rightly proud of. It is very well placed to become even more successful in the future.

What the school should do to improve further

- Make better use of assessment information to set challenging targets so that all pupils know precisely how to improve their work, and more pupils reach the higher levels.
- Provide more opportunities for pupils to learn about the different cultures in British society.
- Consult with pupils about what after-school clubs they would like.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Standards have been improving rapidly over the last three years, and the inspection supports the school's view that pupils are now making good progress.

Children enter school with weaker skills than are typical of this age. The good teaching in Reception enables children to make good progress, and over a third of them reach the expected standards for their age. This good start and the consistently good teaching of all year groups enable pupils to continue to make good progress. The school is particularly successful in enabling most pupils to attain the standards expected by the end of Year 2 and Year 6. This sets a sound basis for their future education and life. However, too few pupils in each year group are reaching the higher levels, especially in English. Pupils with learning and behaviour difficulties receive high quality support. Because of this, they make rapid progress and often reach the expected standard for their age. The 2004 test data showed a significant improvement on previous years. Standards were average at the end of Year 2 and just below average at the end of Year 6. The most recent test results show further improvements, particularly in the number

of pupils reaching the higher levels. The school has recognised the need to raise achievement further.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' personal development, including their spiritual, moral and social development, is very good. Cultural development is satisfactory. Pupils are enthusiastic about coming to school, and they enjoy learning because their lessons are interesting. This is reflected in attendance that is better than average. Good behaviour is now the norm in the school and pupils and parents are very pleased with this improvement. Older pupils are benefiting from extra help to manage their anger and frustrations. They are learning to consider the impact of their actions on others and, as a result, the school is a friendly, happy and safe place. Cooperation, sharing and independence are features of most lessons. Pupils are developing a sense of responsibility to their own community and the rest of the world. They recently organised a ballot to decide whether a 'bring-and-buy stall' or a 'non-uniform day' was the best way to raise money to help victims of the earthquake in Pakistan. Although pupils have a good knowledge of people in different parts of the world, they would like to know more about the many different cultures found in British society. Healthy lifestyles are a priority for the school. The nutritious lunches and fruit snacks that it provides are very popular with pupils and parents. A recently completed new hall and excellent outdoor equipment, which includes a climbing wall, provide pupils with lots of opportunities for exercise and exciting activity.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are consistently good throughout the school. Lessons are fun. They include a wide range of well organised and interesting tasks and encourage pupils to work hard. Pupils with learning difficulties are taught well. Throughout the school, relationships are very good, and pupils behave well because they respect their teachers and wish to be valued by them. A particular and growing strength of the teaching is the way teachers plan each lesson to meet the different ages and abilities of the pupils. This is no easy task when there are three or four year groups in one class. However, careful planning, a good knowledge of each pupil and the excellent use of additional teachers and assistants create highly effective conditions for learning. Teachers carefully nurture pupils' ability to work independently. Resources have to be shared, partners have to be listened to, and pupils have to cooperate in producing a piece of work such as a play script with little intervention from adults. The procedures for tracking how well pupils do in their work are new and not yet being used as effectively as they could be. Teachers do not yet use the information to set challenging targets and stretch all pupils to achieve their very best. The marking of pupils' work informs them how

successful they have been in their tasks, but it does not provide enough guidance on how to improve further.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The school provides a good curriculum which meets the needs of all pupils and enables them to make good progress in their learning. A considerable amount of money has been invested to create an exciting and attractive environment for learning, both inside and outside. A good programme of personal, social, health education and citizenship provides the pupils with the tools necessary to develop personal safety, care and healthy living. Pupils talk excitedly about the many visits which the school arranges. These add interest to their learning and spark their curiosity about new places and people. Out-of-school clubs and activities have had to be curtailed in recent months. However, pupils value these and are very eager for them to return, so that they can develop their interests and abilities in such areas as art and information and communication technology. Almost all the parents feel that the work children do is interesting and that their children learn a lot and make good progress. The inspector agrees with them.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Pupils achieve well in their personal and academic development because of the very good care, guidance and support the school provides for them and their families. Staff quickly identify pupils with learning or behaviour difficulties, and work well with a wide range of agencies to ensure that they get the extra help they need. As a result of very good additional support, most pupils with behaviour or learning difficulties make rapid progress in becoming successful members of the school community. Pupils feel very safe in the school and know their teachers will listen to their concerns, fears and worries in confidence. They especially value the 'worry box and journals', which give those pupils who are less confident an opportunity to tell an adult what is worrying them. Highly effective procedures are in place for child protection, and all staff are very vigilant in their care of children who are vulnerable.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good with some very good features. The recently appointed headteacher has very quickly earned the respect of pupils, parents and governors, and her enthusiasm is described as the 'wow factor in our school'. Strengths and weaknesses have been quickly and accurately identified. The school improvement plan is correctly focused on what needs to be done to bring about change and improve standards. Pupils' achievement is at the heart of this drive. The governors bring a wide range of skills and experience to the school, as well as great commitment. They share the head teacher's vision to do the best for all pupils and work together with a range

of different agencies to bring about improvements. As a result, despite a very turbulent year since taking up her appointment, the school has seen a remarkable transformation in its standing with parents and pupils. The school is committed to making sure all pupils have a chance to do their best. Funds have been obtained from a variety of sources, including local industry and central and local government. These have been used to improve behaviour; to improve the teaching of science; to subsidise the many visits children now go on, and to refurbish the Victorian building to create a modern school which the whole community can enjoy and be very proud of.

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

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2	NA
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2	NA
The behaviour of learners	2	NA
The attendance of learners	2	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	2	NA

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2	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?	2	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?	2	NA
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2	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	2	NA
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	2	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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Lowca Community School

Lowca

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21 October 2005

Dear Children

Thank you so much for being so friendly and welcoming when I visited your school a short while ago. I really enjoyed talking with you and your teachers.

I could see that you enjoy your lessons and work hard to improve your reading, writing and mathematics. You also told me you enjoy the many school trips you now go on to places such as Edinburgh. I was particularly pleased to see you were all trying very hard to improve your behaviour. I was also very pleased to hear about how you try to help other people. I do hope you raised a lot of money for the people in Pakistan.

I think you are very lucky to go to such a good school where your headteacher and teachers work so hard to make lessons fun and help you learn.

There are only a few things I have asked your teachers to do to make the school even better:
to make sure those of you who learn fast can have extra hard work

to tell you how you can improve your work

to help you learn more about children who live in Britain just like you, but who wear different clothes to you and eat different foods.

I think you will enjoy learning new things, and I hope you will always enjoy school and that it will help you to become sensible and happy adults.

Best wishes

Carole Cressey

Annex B