



St James' Catholic Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 112351
LEA Cumbria
Inspection number 278912
Inspection dates 26 January 2006 to 27 January 2006
Reporting inspector Mrs Jackie Barnes

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Lonsdale Road
School category	Voluntary aided		Millom
Age range of pupils	4 to 11		Cumbria, LA18 4AS
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01229 772731
Number on roll	212	Fax number	01229 770237
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mr Frank Cairns
Date of previous inspection	1 July 2000	Headteacher	Miss Maureen Hughes

Age group	Inspection dates	Inspection number
4 to 11	26 January 2006 - 27 January 2006	278912

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors.

Description of the school

This is an average sized school that serves the Catholic faith community and other families in the small town of Millom on the south west coast of Cumbria. The school is generally oversubscribed; although most pupils live nearby, others travel a significant distance to attend. Most families have at least one parent in paid work and entitlement to free school meals is about average. Children start school in the reception year and the majority have the skills and knowledge expected for their age, although individual pupils vary widely in what they know and can do. The school has slightly above the average number of pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities. All pupils have English as their home language. The school has gained a Healthy School accreditation.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

This is a satisfactory school. This judgement agrees with the school's evaluation of its effectiveness. Pupils' achievement is satisfactory overall. Standards are average, with pupils making good progress when they begin school, but slowing a little in subsequent years. Instability in staffing over the last two years, although now mainly resolved, has been a significant factor in the overall decline in standards. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Although pupils' progress is improving, assessment information is not being used well enough to plan their learning. Pupils' personal development is good, as is their behaviour and attendance. The pupils are keen to learn and enjoy school, but they are frequently unclear about what they need to do to improve their work. The curriculum provides interesting clubs and visits, which enhance the work in lessons. The school takes good care of its pupils with due regard for their safety and welfare. Relationships between staff and pupils are trusting and inspire self-confidence. The leadership and management of the school have maintained many of the school's good features during challenging changes in staffing. However, the loss of momentum in pupils' learning was not identified quickly enough. The value for money provided by the school, and its capacity to improve, are satisfactory.

not applicable

What the school should do to improve further

- Make better use of assessment to check pupils' progress and to plan further work.
- Ensure that teaching and tasks are well matched to pupils' individual needs.
- Ensure that priorities for future development are firmly linked to improving pupils' standards and attainment.
- Create more opportunities to help pupils understand what they need to do to improve their work.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Overall, pupils' achievement is satisfactory. This is a decline for the second year from the school's usually good achievement. The school's great disappointment in the declining achievement has resulted in improvements to the way pupils are taught and the skills of teachers. Against a background of significant staff changes, these improvements are beginning to accelerate pupils' progress. Work in their books and in lessons suggests standards are improving, and many pupils are predicted to meet the challenging targets for 2006.

When children start school they differ considerably in their attainment but they all make good progress and are keen to learn. By the end of the reception year almost all have achieved the goals for their age, with many exceeding these, especially in language, literacy and mathematical skills. Pupils make satisfactory progress by the end of Year 2. Their overall results in the 2005 national assessments were about average,

with the percentage of pupils achieving the higher results in reading, writing and mathematics being better than the national figures. Most of the larger than usual number of pupils with learning difficulties also made satisfactory progress overall, and in mathematics their progress was good. The 2005 national assessment results for Year 6 were about average in English, mathematics and science, with the most competent pupils achieving well in science. However, results did not meet the school's challenging targets and many Year 6 pupils did not fulfil the promise of their good results when they were in Year 2.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

The pupils' personal development and well-being are good. Pupils' faith community and their experiences in school effectively support their good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Behaviour and attendance are good. Pupils see school as a friendly place, which they enjoy and where they can share concerns. Most parents agree that their children feel safe. Pupils are particularly enthusiastic about meeting their friends, taking part in sport and visiting places of interest. They have positive attitudes to work and themselves, are keen to learn, and respectful of adults and each other. Most are capable of taking more responsibility for their own improvement. They willingly accept responsibilities, such as raising funds for charity, and School Council members wear their badges with pride. Members were able to express sensitively their views on improvements they would like. Pupils' awareness of the needs of others, together with their involvement in school activities involving budgeting, saving and spending, contribute well to their future economic well-being. The school is accredited as a Healthy School and pupils are familiar with what helps to keep them healthy and what to avoid.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. Lessons are carefully prepared, with due regard to the systematic teaching of literacy and numeracy. Good relationships between staff and pupils actively encourage learning, by valuing pupils' contributions to discussions and successfully setting high expectations for behaviour and effort. Recent use of assessment data to group pupils at similar stages of learning in each year group has identified those who need support, and this is often successfully provided by well-trained teaching assistants. However, the school's arrangements for planning and checking learning in class lessons are not clear or consistent enough to ensure all pupils make good progress. Pupils are rarely clear about what they need to do in order to improve their work. When combined with the frequent changes of staff in some year groups, this lack of rigour has been the main contributor to slowing the overall pace of learning, despite the efforts of individual teachers. Recent training has heightened teachers' awareness of the need to use assessment more effectively. The

impact is already evident in improved methods of marking pupils' work, and more effective checks on pupils' understanding, especially in mathematics. Where individual needs are identified and consistently provided for, such as in the Reception year and for pupils with significant learning difficulties, their progress is usually good.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum is satisfactory. In the Foundation Stage, the children learn effectively while enjoying the wide variety of experiences provided. This owes much to the focus on the needs of individual children and good systems for planning, checking and recording children's development. Throughout the rest of the school, the pupils enjoy the wide variety of experiences provided, especially the sporting activities and after-school clubs. These contribute well to their personal development including their understanding of how to live healthily. Creative skills and talents are also developed effectively in subjects such as music, where the quality of the singing is particularly good. Sometimes pupils do not have sufficient opportunity to consolidate their understanding by applying newly acquired skills and knowledge in a variety of situations. As a result, they are not always confident in the use of basic skills. The school's self evaluation has recognised the need to plan learning experiences across subjects, and has recently begun to do this.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Pupils are well cared for and enabled to learn in a calm atmosphere with clear expectations for behaviour, safety and health. All staff encourage pupils' self-confidence and a willingness to participate. Teaching assistants usually have a specific role in supporting individual pupils or small groups, often those with learning difficulties, and pupils gain from this chance to receive personal attention. Guidance for personal development is strong, with particularly good counselling about behaviour. Pupils say they trust staff and are confident that they can talk to them about any personal problems or insecurities. Guidance on how to make the best progress in their academic work is very variable. Because assessment data and other information are not sufficiently used in planning pupils' progress, their targets are often too general to provide clear guidance on what to do next. Too much relies on the skills and availability of individual teachers, some of whom have only been at the school a short time. As a result, pupils are often unclear about how they can further improve their work.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Leadership and management are satisfactory. Changes in staffing, including several key members of the senior management team, came relatively quickly and disrupted the coherence and quality of the work of a successful team of teachers and managers.

The disruption also limited the opportunities to introduce new ideas and ways of working. The key loss has been in maintaining the good progress that pupils previously made, especially in Key Stage 2. Long established systems for managing the school did not have the rigour necessary to provide an early alert when progress was slowing and action was needed. Nonetheless, standards are at least average and achievement is improving, while other aspects of the school's work have been maintained well, notably the pupils' enjoyment and positive attitudes to school, and their good attendance and behaviour.

Those involved with leading and managing the school, including the governing body and the local authority, show a clear commitment to regaining the school's beacon status. The situation has already improved. Most of the staffing issues have been resolved and more permanent appointments can be made. Membership of the senior management team is now stable, with the exception of the headteacher who is due to retire next term. Consultation with staff, parents, governors and the local authority has contributed to an accurate evaluation of the school's strengths and areas for improvement. Useful work has already been undertaken to improve the teaching and the leadership of those with responsibilities. The new members of the management team work well together and are making a significant contribution to ensuring that pupils' progress is boosted. The school has a challenging agenda for a new headteacher to lead but also has satisfactory capacity to improve.

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?	3	NA
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	3	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

How well do learners achieve?	3	NA
The standards ¹ 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	3	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	3	NA
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3	NA

The quality of provision

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

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

08456 404045

Miss Maureen Hughes

St James' Catholic Primary School

Lonsdale Road

Millom

Cumbria

LA18 4AS

26 January 2006

Dear Children

Thank you for making the inspectors so welcome when they visited your school. You helped us to understand how much you enjoyed your clubs and other activities, and how important your friends were in helping you to learn and to have fun.

We found your school a welcoming place, which looks after you well, makes you feel safe, and helps you to learn about being healthy. Your behaviour is good, you look after each other, and your attendance is better than in most schools. We were impressed by the work of your School Council to make sure your ideas for improvements are well known to the adults who manage the school.

Most of you make steady progress, and in your tests you reach the levels expected for your age. We think you could do even better, so we have asked your school to plan your learning more carefully, check how well you are making progress, and let you know what you can do to improve your own work.

Best wishes to you all.

Yours sincerely

Mrs Jackie Barnes

Lead inspector