



Valley Primary School and Nursery

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 134214
LEA Cumbria
Inspection number 282491
Inspection dates 27 April 2006 to 28 April 2006
Reporting inspector Mr David Earley

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Whinlatter Road
School category	Community		Whitehaven
Age range of pupils	3 to 11		Cumbria, CA28 8DA
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01946 852668
Number on roll	347	Fax number	01946 852669
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mr Mark Yearsley
Date of previous inspection	Not applicable	Headteacher	Mrs Hillary Reay

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This is a new school of average size, formed in September 2004 from the amalgamation of former infant and junior schools. It lies within an area with high levels of social deprivation. A very high number of pupils are eligible for free school meals. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is above average. Attainment on entry is below average. The 347 pupils are of white British origin. As a result of local demographic changes, numbers on roll are falling.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Inspectors agree with the school's judgement that this is a satisfactory school which gives satisfactory value for money. The progress pupils make throughout the school is satisfactory overall. In the Foundation Stage, children make good progress because of the good teaching. By the end of Year 6, although standards are improving, they are below average. Standards in mathematics are lower than in English and science. Pupils enjoy school and most attend regularly, although the poor attendance of a small group results in below average attendance overall. Most pupils behave well except for a minority who find this difficult at times. The curriculum is satisfactory overall with good provision for enrichment. Teaching and learning are satisfactory and improving. However, teachers do not make sufficient use of assessments to plan future learning and some lessons lack the variety, pace and challenge needed to motivate pupils. Procedures for child protection and health and safety are in place. Pupils' personal needs are well cared for, although the tracking of academic progress and guidance is underdeveloped. The headteacher provides strong leadership and staff and governors are working well to improve standards and provision. The newly amalgamated school has laid down secure foundations for future development and has the capacity to improve further.

What the school should do to improve further

- Make improvements in teaching and learning so that it is consistently good with all lessons being varied, well paced and challenging.
- Track pupils' progress more rigorously and use the results of assessments to plan their future learning.
- Raise standards, particularly in mathematics at Key Stage 2.
- Raise attendance by continuing to work with the small numbers of parents who do not send their children to school regularly.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Achievement is satisfactory overall. This is a new school so test results are only available for 2005. At the end of Year 2, standards were average. In the tests at the end of Year 6, standards were below average overall because some pupils were absent during the tests and a high proportion of pupils had learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Standards were significantly below average in mathematics because of weaknesses in its teaching. These have now been remedied.

Children enter the nursery with standards which are below average. They make good progress through the Foundation Stage, responding to good teaching. By the time they reach Year 1 standards are usually average. Progress in Key Stage 1 is satisfactory. A high proportion of pupils in the current Year 2 have learning difficulties and/or disabilities, so overall standards this year are below average. Progress in Key Stage 2 is satisfactory. Standards in the current Year 6 are below average because a high

proportion of pupils in this year group have learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Pupils identified as having learning difficulties and/or disabilities make satisfactory progress in lessons. Standards are improving throughout the school because of the successful implementation of strategies to improve performance. The quality of teaching is also improving. There has been insufficient time for these improvements to make significant impact in Year 6.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

Personal development, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory. Most parents say that their children enjoy school and pupils say that everyone gets on well. Inspection evidence shows that the attitudes, attendance and behaviour of many pupils are good and have improved recently. However, a minority of older pupils are unenthusiastic about school. The behaviour of a few is not always appropriate; on occasions this disrupts the learning of others. A group of parents, despite the best efforts of the school and local authority officers, do not make sure their children attend regularly enough. As a result, attendance overall is below average. Pupils have a good understanding of how to stay safe in different situations and the importance of living a healthy lifestyle, although some pupils, particularly older ones, are reluctant to adapt to a healthy diet. Pupils have insufficient opportunities to work independently, particularly in using their literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT) skills. Pupils make a positive contribution to the school community through the school council and willingly take on responsibilities.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Inspectors agree with the school that the quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory overall. The best lessons are well paced and work is carefully tailored to the needs of all pupils, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The school has now adopted a consistent approach to the planning of lessons so they are well structured and make clear what pupils are expected to learn. Most teachers have good subject knowledge and manage pupils well. However, in a minority of lessons, teachers spend too much time managing pupils' behaviour so progress is slowed. More use is being made of ICT to research and display interesting resources but this remains an area for further development. Teaching and learning are improving as a result of successful staff training. Teachers are beginning to use a wider range of teaching methods, which help to engage and hold pupils' interest. However, some lessons still lack the variety, pace and challenge which is needed to motivate pupils to work hard and enjoy learning independently. Marking of pupils' work is satisfactory overall, but pupils are not always clear about how to improve their work. Teachers do not make sufficient use of assessments to plan their pupils' future learning in order to accelerate progress.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum is satisfactory and planning for all subjects is adequate with sufficient time given to each subject. A wide range of extra-curricular activities, visits out of school and visitors to school help to enrich the curriculum. However, there are insufficient opportunities for pupils to extend their skills in literacy, numeracy and ICT in the other subjects of the curriculum. An appropriate emphasis is placed on the promotion of healthy lifestyles and preparation for future economic well-being. This responds to local needs and enables pupils to make informed choices. Older pupils, some of whom are trained as play leaders, help those younger than themselves. Pupils contribute well to the local community, for example, by giving musical performances. The curriculum in the Foundation Stage is good, with a wide range of interesting and challenging activities. Good links with the local secondary school help to prepare pupils for the next stage in their education and ensure that transfer is usually smooth.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Care, guidance and support are satisfactory. Highly committed staff provide good care and guidance for pupils' personal needs. Support is good for the most vulnerable pupils and those with behavioural difficulties. However, guidance for pupils on their academic progress is less well developed. Older learners are not always clear about how to improve their work and, consequently, some pupils do not reach the targets that are set for them. The school's use of assessment data to track learners' progress is improving but is not yet consistent enough to provide a full overview of all pupils' performance. Due attention is paid to health and safety procedures and risk assessments, which are regularly evaluated. All staff understand child protection procedures. Most pupils say that they feel safe and can turn to an adult in confidence if they need help or advice. The school works well with external agencies and with parents through regular reports and parents' evenings.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The headteacher has a clear vision for the development of this newly amalgamated school, which is well focused on raising standards and improving provision. With the support of the deputy headteacher and senior management team, her strong and purposeful leadership has led to a shared ethos and a staff team committed to school improvement. Decisive action has been taken to improve behaviour and to raise standards. As a result, behaviour has improved. There has been insufficient time for standards to be significantly improved, particularly for older pupils. Changes in staff and responsibilities have been sensitively managed. The school's self-evaluation is a realistic appraisal of where it is now and links well with the school improvement plan. Subject leaders do not have sufficient opportunities to monitor teaching and learning in order to make improvements. The management

of the provision for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is satisfactory. Parents' and pupils' opinions are sought and acted upon and most parents have positive views of the school. Governors are supportive of the school. They form an effective partnership with the headteacher and staff, although they need to extend their role in acting as critical friends. The budget is astutely managed in order to plan for falling rolls.

Good leadership from the headteacher and strong commitment from staff and governors have enabled satisfactory progress to be made at this early stage in the life of the school, indicating satisfactory capacity for further improvement.

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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?	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	NA	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?	3	NA
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3	NA
The behaviour of learners	3	NA
The attendance of learners	4	NA
How well learners enjoy their education	3	NA
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	NA
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	3	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

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The Pupils and Children

Valley Primary School and Nursery

Whinlatter Road

Whitehaven

Cumbria

CA28 8DA

28 April 2006

Dear Pupils and Children

Thank you very much for making us welcome in your school. You were kind and helpful and we enjoyed talking to you. You clearly enjoy coming to school and tell us that you feel safe and well cared for, and that you get on well with each other.

We think that Mrs Reay is a good headteacher and that she and the adults in school have worked hard to join the infant and junior schools together. We were pleased to see that most of you are polite and courteous and behave well, although sometimes some children forget to do this. Most of you attend school regularly and we have asked the school to remind the parents of those who do not attend as well as they should, to help them to improve. You understand how to keep healthy and enjoy taking part in the after school clubs. You go on exciting visits out of school and have interesting people come in to talk to you and work with you.

The school makes sure that you get a good start in the Nursery and Reception where there are lots of interesting things to do. By the end of Year 6, most of you make satisfactory progress in your English, mathematics and science and you are beginning to improve, but we would like to see you doing even better, particularly in mathematics. To help you to do this we have asked your teachers to try and teach more good lessons and to make better use of tests to help you know what you need to do to improve.

We are pleased to see that your new school is helping to make things better for you. Thank you again for making us so welcome.

Best wishes

David Earley

(Your school inspector)