



Bewcastle School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 112103
Local Authority Cumbria
Inspection number 289174
Inspection date 14 September 2006
Reporting inspector Jennie Platt

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Bewcastle
School category	Community		Carlisle, Cumbria
Age range of pupils	4-11		CA6 6PF
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01697 748662
Number on roll (school)	26	Fax number	01697 748662
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Mr Bill Nelson
		Headteacher	Mr John Roberts
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected		

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

This is a very small school where pupils are taught in two classes. It is in an isolated area and most pupils travel from outlying hamlets and farms. Attainment on entry varies with such small numbers but is broadly average. Very few pupils take a free school meal. No pupils are from minority ethnic groups. A below average number of pupils are assessed as having learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

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 school which provides good value for money. It is an exciting place to learn because teachers plan a stimulating curriculum which effectively broadens the horizons of these pupils who live in a beautiful, but isolated, part of the country. Personal development is excellent. Everyone is very friendly and very well behaved. Pupils enjoy school and attendance is consistently high. Parents are very pleased with the education their children receive. They appreciate the community spirit and opportunities to share in their children's education. One parent writes, 'this school is a pillar of the community'. Pupils play an excellent role in working with the local community. This was most evident in the school's famous 'film festival' when the school and community came together to celebrate the pupils' amazing achievements in making films. Local sponsors were sought and support was tremendous. Attention to detail, such as the walk on the red carpet, was not missed! This event is just one example of the way pupils are encouraged to express their own ideas. Consequently, they grow in confidence and this prepares them well for their future. Good attention is given to pupils' welfare and they know how to keep safe. The outdoor swimming pool is a tremendous asset and is just one feature of the school that leads to pupils' good knowledge of healthy living.

Teaching and learning are good and enable pupils of all abilities, including those with learning difficulties, to achieve well. Provision in the Foundation Stage is satisfactory and improving now more space is available. The curriculum has not yet been adjusted to make best use of this extra space and occasionally the lack of adult support means children are not always involved in purposeful activities. Children make satisfactory progress and attain the early learning goals expected for children of this age. Pupils make good progress in Key Stage 1 other than in writing, where progress is satisfactory. In Key Stage 2, teaching is especially challenging and progress accelerates. Consequently, standards are well above average and pupils often exceed the level expected for their age.

The school has an accurate view of its effectiveness because good leadership from the headteacher has successfully developed teachers' confidence in analysing what is working well and what needs attention. Governors are also involved in the self-evaluation process and so are knowledgeable about what is happening in school. The school has introduced new assessment procedures and a wealth of assessment information is now available. As yet, this information is not easily accessible to monitor progress from Reception to Year 6. The school has improved well since the last inspection and has good capacity to improve further because all working in the school are dedicated to their work and eager to move forward.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the curriculum for children in the Foundation Stage and check sufficient adult support is available to interact with the children.
- Raise standards in writing in Key Stage 1.
- Refine information from assessment so that it is easier to track pupils' progress.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

The pupils' achievement is good. When children enter Reception their ability varies but overall is average. A few hesitate to interact with others but this aspect is given good attention. Newcomers make good progress in their personal development and quickly learn to play and collaborate with others. In other areas of learning children make satisfactory progress and by the end of Reception most reach the expected learning goals for their age.

Achievement in Key Stage 1 is good. The small numbers of pupils taking national tests each year mean that the school's results cannot be compared reliably with national data but, over recent years, they show that pupils make good progress, especially in reading and mathematics. In writing, pupils struggle with the use of imaginative vocabulary and this restricts their achievement, particularly that of the more able. Good progress is sustained in Key Stage 2. Teaching is good and pupils are more involved with their own learning. This has led to rising standards over the last three years and an improvement in the pupils' performance in national tests. In 2005 results were well above average and early indications are that the most recent test results also show high standards.

Pupils with learning difficulties benefit from being taught in small classes and make good and often better progress to reach the level expected for their age.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

This is a wonderful school to attend because of its warm and friendly atmosphere. One pupil said, 'we have loads of friends and even though this is a small school there are a lot of exciting things to do'. Pupils really enjoy school and this is evident in attendance which is consistently well above average. Their high basic skills and confidence to interact with others and come up with new ideas prepare them well for the future. When receiving his award at the Film Festival, one pupil described it as 'the pinnacle of his career', providing clear evidence that the event achieved its purpose of increasing pupils' vocabulary and raising self-esteem. This was a real social event; pupils play an excellent role in this close-knit community. Pupils have a good understanding of keeping safe and healthy. They enjoy growing vegetables and know that eating them is healthy.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Social and moral development is especially strong. Spiritual development is good and pupils really appreciate their surroundings. The school is well aware the children have limited contact with people from cultures other than their own. So, for example, gaps in their knowledge and experiences are filled by visitors and visits who help the pupils gain a clear insight into life in a multicultural society.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are good because teachers have the best interests and needs of the pupils at the heart of their lessons. Throughout the school, friendly relationships make learning fun and laughter often rings out. Stimulating tasks make pupils eager to learn. Teachers effectively compensate for many pupils' restricted vocabulary by discussion, role play and working together with others. A focus for the school is encouraging pupils to come up with their own ideas. This is evident in the good use of questioning and is especially successful in raising standards in science in Key Stage 2.

In the Foundation Stage teaching is satisfactory. A choice of imaginative tasks is always available but it is not made clear what children are to learn. Adult support is not always available and this leads to insufficient interaction to extend learning.

Teaching and learning are good at Key Stage 1, except in writing where they are satisfactory. This is because the teaching does not always challenge the more able pupils sufficiently. In Key Stage 2, pupils rise to the challenge of high expectations and strive hard to improve. Throughout the school teachers match work closely to the needs of pupils with learning difficulties and the extra adult support and use of resources leads to effective learning and good progress.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is carefully planned for mixed ages and this makes a good contribution to progress as it successfully avoids any omission or repetition of the National Curriculum. Personal and social development is informal and developed well through class discussions, themes in assembly and visitors.

The Foundation Stage is planned well to cover the required areas of learning but, in practice, the room is not organised effectively to encourage independent learning and creative play. In the afternoons, staff are deployed to use their special skills and interests to ensure that pupils in all classes benefit from a variety of interesting activities that enhance the pace of learning. During the inspection they enjoyed making vegetable curry and learnt the skills to map the school grounds. Very good attention is given to physical education. The swimming pool is used almost daily in the warm weather so that all are confident swimmers. Visits and visitors also add richness to the curriculum and pupils look forward to the annual residential visit.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

This is a caring school and the benefits of a small school are obvious as every child and their families are known by staff. The school carries out all the required health

and safety checks and all staff are trained to offer help when needed. Pupils feel secure and this allows them to concentrate on learning.

Teachers assess pupils' progress well but it is not always clear how pupils are progressing compared with national expectations. This leads to the needs of pupils, especially the more able, not always being fully met. This is less of a problem in Key Stage 2 where assessment information is shared with pupils so that they understand what they need to do to improve.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher is an effective and enthusiastic leader. On his appointment he involved staff in a thorough audit of the school's provision. This was an effective introduction to self-evaluation and the school has an accurate picture of its strengths and areas requiring attention. This has had a positive impact on progress in the school because gaps in resources have been filled. Teaching has been strengthened with more attention to different teaching styles which lead to more effective learning. The headteacher's collaborative approach to management includes parents and governors and means the school's capacity to improve is good because there is a desire to be inventive and move the school forward

Identified priorities are tackled well through the school's improvement plan. This is a well set out document clearly showing action and responsibilities. Although actions are raising standards the link between action and impact on standards is not always made clear.

Governance is satisfactory with good features in their support and management of the school's finances. The headteacher ensures they are knowledgeable about what is happening in the school but as yet they are less involved in finding out for themselves.

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Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
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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
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

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

Personal development and well-being

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

The quality of provision

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

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

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Bewcastle School

Bewcastle

Carlisle

Cumbria

CA6 6PF

15 September 2006

Dear Pupils

Many thanks for the way you welcomed me to your school and although I was only there for one day I really enjoyed my visit. What a pity it rained and I was not able to see you at play in your wonderful surroundings. I appreciated the way you chatted to me and it has helped me to write this report.

I agree that yours is happy school and you clearly enjoy your lessons. You told me you have many favourite activities and I was very impressed by your Film Festival. I am

pleased you know how to keep safe and healthy. You are very lucky to have a swimming pool and I am glad it is used regularly. Your parents told me how much they appreciate

the way they are involved in the school and this does make it a very friendly school. I

think your personal development is excellent and you behave very well and try hard in lessons.

I have asked Mr Roberts and the governors to look at the experiences offered to the younger children especially now they have more space. The teachers are also looking at ways to improve your writing skills and how to check on the progress you are making.

I am sure you will all have a wonderful year at school and I wish you well for the future.

Best wishes

Mrs J E Platt

Lead inspector