

Bookwell Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	112155
Local Authority	Cumbria
Inspection number	289186
Inspection dates	13–14 June 2007
Reporting inspector	Keith Oglesby

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	212
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Tim Needham
Headteacher	Mr Gary Postlethwaite
Date of previous school inspection	1 February 2003
School address	Bookwell Egremont Cumbria CA22 2LT
Telephone number	01946 820408
Fax number	01946 820408

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Bookwell is an average sized school, which serves a community in a Cumbrian market town. Nearly all pupils are of White British origin, although a very small number from Eastern Europe have recently joined the school. None are at an early stage of learning English. Pupils come from a range of socio-economic circumstances. The number of pupils identified with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is average. The proportion known to be eligible for free school meals is below average. When children start school in the Reception class their attainment is similar to that of most children of this age.

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, deservedly popular with parents. ‘The head and staff do a tremendous job and I would be hard pressed to find another school of the same standard.’ This view is held by the overwhelming majority of parents and carers. They recognise that their children are well cared for, enjoy school, work hard and achieve well. Pupils leave the school as thoughtful, confident, well-mannered young people, well prepared for the next stage of their education.

When children start school they have a wide range of skills, but attainment is broadly in line with what would be expected nationally. They make good progress in the Reception class because the teaching and support are good and the practical curriculum is well matched to the needs of young children. Most children meet or exceed the expected goals by the time they join Year 1. They continue to make good progress in Years 1 to 6. In 2006, the results of the national Year 2 assessments were above average. The results of the Year 6 tests in 2006 were well above average, particularly high in English. More able pupils are suitably challenged, with a high proportion reaching beyond the expected level for their ages. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, and those learning English as their second language, also achieve well. This is because of the good teaching and help they receive, as well as the caring and supportive ethos throughout the school.

Teaching and learning are good and sometimes outstanding. Pupils agree that teachers make lessons interesting and explain new ideas in ways that help them to move on confidently. Consequently, they listen and behave well. Pupils want to improve and work hard and this is why they are achieving well. However, there is room for some improvement, despite the school’s good arrangements for sharing expertise in teaching. For example, progress occasionally slows in the first part of the lesson when pupils are sitting and listening for too long, even when they are ready to begin and show what they can do. As a result, they do not always have enough time to produce the work of which they are capable.

The school provides a good curriculum, which meets pupils’ needs well. An extensive range of clubs, visitors and events enhances pupils’ personal development as well as their enjoyment of school. Pupils are learning how to live a safe and healthy life. Learners prosper because they have an interesting range of well-planned activities, good care and support and effective teaching. However, leaders are far from complacent and are always looking for ways to improve what the school offers. A current priority, for example, is to encourage pupils to become more involved in thinking about their own learning and how it could be improved. This is at an early stage and does not yet make the most of pupils’ positive and responsible attitudes, or their willingness to work independently.

Leadership and management are good at all levels. Leaders have a clear view of the school’s strengths and areas for development, gained through accurate self-evaluation, which is helping to drive the school forward. Good teamwork and high morale help to make the school a happy and purposeful place in which to learn. Governors are well informed and increasingly involved in evaluating and planning for school improvement. The school has maintained all the strengths seen at the last inspection and dealt with all the minor issues suggested then. It is well placed to continue to improve and offers good value for money.

What the school should do to improve further

- Increase the pace of lessons and ensure greater consistency in the quality of teaching and learning across the school.
- Evaluate and increase the opportunities for pupils to take even more responsibility in improving their own learning.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils achieve well from their broadly average starting points and standards are well above average in Year 6. In the 2006 national tests, for example, standards were well above average in English with almost two thirds of the year group reaching a higher level than is expected for their age. Pupils' assessment results in Year 2 were above average standards in 2006 and results in writing were particularly good.

Children make a good start in Reception and most reach the expected levels before they enter Year 1. They continue to make good progress because teaching is good and they want to learn. By Year 2, standards are just above average with writing a particular strength.

Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities also achieve well because their needs are identified early and support is well organised. Those learning English as their second language have made great strides because they receive much encouragement from adults and other pupils. There is no significant difference in the progress made by girls and boys.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils are proud of their school. They enjoy coming to school, cooperate well with each other and are polite, friendly and considerate. Their personal development is good. Pupils make good progress in a happy and safe environment. Parents appreciate this and one wrote, 'I think Bookwell takes the children's happiness at school really seriously.' Attendance is above average. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. A range of experiences, including circle time and assemblies, develops their understanding of themselves and their place in the world. Pupils say that adults listen to them and give lots of praise and rewards. This encourages them to try new things and express their opinions confidently.

Pupils have a good understanding of how to live a safe and healthy life. They take advantage of ample opportunities for physical exercise and this was recognised by the Activemark Award in 2003. Pupils enjoy chances to take responsibility, such as helping younger children or serving on the effective school council. They are learning to manage budgets, for example, of the infants' weekly coffee shop. Pupils are a familiar sight in the local community. They make regular contributions, for example, singing at charity events or gardening for Britain in Bloom.

Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education. They have good standards in English and mathematics and use information and communication technology confidently. Other assets include their good social skills and positive attitudes. The school is aware that pupils are sometimes reluctant to use their initiative, for example, to go beyond what teachers ask them to do. A current priority is to encourage more independence in learning and this is beginning to help raise standards.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The quality of teaching and learning is good. It varies between satisfactory and excellent. There are strengths everywhere in teachers' enthusiasm, good relationships with their classes and the efficient way that lessons are planned and prepared. Pupils like and respect all the staff. 'They are polite to us and do their job well,' said one boy, 'they use a bit of humour but don't go over the top.' They think that teachers work hard to make the work interesting and understandable. One reason is that teachers explain clearly, often using information and communication technology (ICT) skilfully to make sure that everyone is involved. They use assessment information well to ensure that work is set at the right level for all abilities. Another strength is that basic skills are taught systematically and then used in interesting contexts across the curriculum.

In several lessons, where introductions and explanations are too slow or too long, progress could be even better. On these occasions, pupils listen and behave very well but need more time to work on their own tasks. In a few classes, pupils are beginning to look critically at their own work; they use the teacher's guidelines to decide how it could be better and then work independently to improve the quality. Pupils show that they are capable of working responsibly in this way. Some successful work on improving writing indicates that this sort of involvement helps to raise standards.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is broad and balanced and meets the needs of pupils well. There is a good emphasis on developing literacy and numeracy and pupils achieve good basic skills. There are good opportunities for pupils to use and develop their writing, number and computing skills in other subjects as seen, for example, when Year 6 used a computer program to enhance their designs of buildings. A well-planned programme of personal, social and health education enables pupils to develop good social skills and understand how to live safe, healthy and tolerant lives.

The provision for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is good and enables them to achieve well. The school's Discovery Club provides extra challenge for more able pupils, although it is too soon to judge its impact on standards.

The curriculum in the Foundation Stage is good and is firmly based on purposeful, practical activities that show a good understanding of how young children learn.

The curriculum is enhanced by a wide range of sporting, musical and other additional activities and by the introduction of French. Older pupils benefit from a residential adventure trip. There are good links with other schools and local organisations, which give pupils extra experiences; for example, in drama and music at the nearby secondary school.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The quality of care guidance and support is good and is much appreciated by parents. One wrote, 'Teachers have made every effort for my child's welfare and, therefore, mine also.' All the recommended procedures are in place to safeguard pupils in and out of school. Pupils with

learning difficulties and/or disabilities are identified at an early stage and receive good support to enable them to work and achieve well.

Good behaviour is encouraged and reinforced through a clear system of sanctions and rewards which is well understood by the pupils.

The school has good systems for assessing and following pupils' progress through the school and the information is used well to set literacy and numeracy targets for groups to help them improve. Teachers give the pupils useful advice and information on how well they are achieving and what they need to do to move up to the next level. However, the school is at an early stage in encouraging pupils to use their initiative and be part of this; for example, by analysing their own work and helping to set their own individual targets.

The school's good links with the local Nurseries, the planned opportunities for children to spend time in the reception class before they start and the good information to parents all help children settle quickly into school. The older pupils say they have no worries about moving to their next school because of good transfer arrangements.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher and his deputy have an energetic presence around the school, which parents and pupils appreciate. One parent wrote, 'They care about every aspect of life in this school and it really shows.' The school has accurately identified its strengths and weaknesses through detailed and wide-ranging self-evaluation. The headteacher is successful in developing leadership skills in others. As a result, there is effective teamwork and a shared sense of where the school is going. Leadership of subjects, the Foundation Stage and in the provision for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are all good.

The arrangements for checking the quality of teaching and learning are good and have effectively identified what is working well and have led to improvements. More of this work will be needed if all the teaching is to reach the standard of the best. There are excellent systems for assessment and keeping an eye on every pupil's progress.

Governors have a good understanding of the strengths of the school and how it is developing. They carry out their duties effectively. Since the last inspection they have become more regular visitors to the school, for example on 'governor days'. This has helped them to play their part as critical friends.

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Annex A

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	2
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?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The behaviour of learners	2
The attendance of learners	2
How well learners enjoy their education	2
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	2
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2

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.

Annex A

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	2
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

15 June 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Bookwell Primary School, Egremont, CA22 2LT

As you know, we visited your school recently for two days. We are writing to thank you for being so helpful, welcoming and polite. We enjoyed our visit. One thing we noticed is the way that everyone seems to get on together. Adults and children support each other so well; this makes the school a happy and safe place for you to learn. You work hard in lessons and do lots of interesting things. We know you enjoy all the clubs and visits. Many of you told us you were proud of your school and pleased about how well you are doing. We think you should be.

Many of your parents wrote to us to tell us how much they value your school. They especially liked the way the school looks after you and sorts out any small problems quickly.

We usually leave some suggestions for things that could be even better. In your case there are two.

- You told us that it helped when teachers give you targets and objectives and show you how to make each piece of work better. We liked the way that some of you use this advice to improve your work. Perhaps you could do more of this yourselves; for example, by helping to set your own personal targets. These targets could change quite often as your work gets better and better.
- You listen very well in lessons when your teachers explain things. Because of this, we have suggested that sometimes lessons could have a bit less sitting and listening. This would give you more time to show what you can do.

Yours sincerely

Keith Oglesby and Shirley Herring

The inspectors