



Stramongate Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 112188
Local Authority Cumbria
Inspection number 289196
Inspection dates 6–7 December 2006
Reporting inspector Martin Bradley HMI

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Stramongate Primary School Blackhall Road, Kendal Cumbria, LA9 4BT
School category	Community	Telephone number	01539 773622
Age range of pupils	4–11	Fax number	01539 773623
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Chair	Mr John Dyer
Number on roll (school)	407	Headteacher	Mr Mike Poole
Appropriate authority	The governing body		
Date of previous school inspection	1 April 2002		

Age group 4–11	Inspection dates 6–7 December 2006	Inspection number 289196
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and two Additional inspectors.

Description of the school

Stramongate Primary School is much larger than many other primary schools. It has 407 pupils who come from 10 wards across Kendal and who have a range of socio-economic backgrounds. Seventy nine per cent of the children come from outside the immediate area of the school. The great majority of pupils have attended some form of pre-school provision before coming to Stramongate. Although a low percentage of pupils, 7.2%, are identified as having additional learning needs and/or difficulties, an above average proportion, 3.2%, have statements of special educational need. There are 14 classes, two for each age group. On entry to the school overall attainment is in line with national expectations, but there is a broad range with a significant number of pupils working below national levels especially in aspects of language. Personal and social development is generally above that expected for their age. During the inspection the school staged four Christmas productions which together involved all year groups.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 4

In accordance with section 13 (3) of the Education Act 2005, HMCI is of the opinion that this school requires significant improvement, because it is performing significantly less well than in all the circumstances it could reasonably be expected to perform. The school is therefore given a Notice to Improve. Significant improvement is required in relation to the achievement and standards of pupils of all abilities throughout the school, particularly by the end of Key Stage 2.

Achievement and standards are inadequate as too few of the pupils reach the standards of which they are capable by the end of Key Stage 2. Overall progress throughout the school is inadequate. The school has not provided pupils with sufficiently challenging targets to enable them to make good progress and raise their attainment. This was recognised by the local authority (LA) in May 2006 when the school was invited to join its Intensifying Support Programme. The support given has already led to several major developments in the school's work during the present term, but as yet they have not had time to show any clear impact on pupils' progress. In September 2006, the appointment of a new headteacher was accompanied by other senior appointments which created a completely new senior management team. Together with the staff, they have worked very hard to implement changes identified by the intensifying support programme. These include more rigorous self evaluation, detailed target setting for individual pupils and more realistic and challenging end of Key Stage 2 targets. The school has begun to review the pupils' targets which were set earlier this term, refining them so that they are more accurate. As yet pupils have not been given individual targets expressed as National Curriculum subject levels for the end of each year and the end of their Key Stage. Governors are now beginning to make use of the better information which they are receiving and are in a stronger position to act as critical friends of the school. These developments enable the school to show a satisfactory capacity to improve but as yet the school does not provide satisfactory value for money

Alongside the changes, the school has sought to maintain its former very caring and supportive approach, and has been broadly successful in achieving this. However the introduction of clear and challenging targets for individual pupils gives them better guidance for their learning. There remain other issues which the school needs to address. These include ensuring that pupil behaviour in lessons is consistently good and that their keenness to learn is effectively promoted at all times. Assessment is not sufficiently closely linked to planning future work. Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities receive good support from teachers and teaching assistants. These pupils' work is regularly monitored with reports going to their class teachers each week. This is good practice.

The curriculum is satisfactory and is supported by good enrichment activities. There are good links with outside agencies and with schools overseas. The curriculum needs to be reviewed to ensure that the time allocated to each subject is less varied both between parallel classes and between year groups. The time spent in lessons in Key Stage 2 is below the nationally recommended minimum.

What the school should do to improve further

- raise standards throughout the school;
- ensure that pupils have clear and challenging targets for their current work as well as for the end of the year and the end of the Key Stage;
- improve the quality of teaching, planning and assessment;
- review the amount of time Key Stage 2 pupils spend in lessons and ensure that there is greater consistency in the time allocated for subjects across all classes.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 4

The school judged achievement and standards to be satisfactory, however in the view of the inspectors it is inadequate. By the end of the Foundation Stage many children have achieved at the levels nationally expected. Others are below these expectations. The 2006 assessments made at the end of Key Stage 1 have not been validated yet, but they suggest that standards are broadly satisfactory, but do not show sufficient progress relative to the Foundation Stage results. The 2006 results were moderated, leading to lower scores than in previous years. By the end of Key Stage 2 too few pupils achieve at Level 5 and too many achieve below national expectations. Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities make good progress: they are identified at an early stage and receive effective support well matched to their needs. Their progress is regularly reported to the class teachers.

The school has set overall targets for year 6, but in recent years these have not provided sufficiently accurate challenges. They have been revised to more realistic levels for 2007. In the present term the new senior management team has introduced pupil targets for years 1 to 6. These targets are much more closely matched to pupils' current attainment and they provide appropriate challenge.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

Although the school considered personal development and well being to be good, in the inspectors' view it is satisfactory, with some good elements. Spiritual, moral and social development is satisfactory. Cultural development is good. The school has good links with several schools overseas, and raises funds to support them. It received a DfES British Council International School Award in recognition of this work. The pupils enjoy meeting visitors from other countries, and take part in a range of cultural events which extend their awareness of relevant issues. Attendance is above the national average. Whilst most pupils enjoy their education, for some their enjoyment is reduced by the disruptive classroom behaviour of a minority of others. In the playground and when moving around school, behaviour is good. The school effectively promotes healthy lifestyles. Most pupils feel safe in school and adopt safe practices. Fund raising, often coordinated by Year 6 pupils, provides an introduction to workplace and other skills. The pupils' contacts with visitors and the local community provides them with

good social and learning experiences. There are opportunities for pupils to take individual responsibility, and the school council is able to make suggestions for improvements to the school facilities.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

The inspectors agree with the school's judgement that teaching and learning is satisfactory. In the 26 lessons seen, teaching was good in 7 and in the rest it was judged to be satisfactory, although often with inadequate elements. The better teaching provides good challenges well matched to pupils' prior attainment, ensures that all pupils concentrate well and makes sure that all are aware of how to meet their recently devised targets. In such lessons the good pace of teaching enables all pupils to make progress in their learning. However overall, teaching does not identify sufficiently clearly or rigorously the needs of individual pupils and groups. Assessment and monitoring practices remain inconsistent across classes and frequently are too informal. Classroom assistants provide good support and often use their initiative particularly well to sustain pupils' learning. Teachers' planning is not currently monitored on a regular basis and practices vary. Assessment information is not always used to inform planning directly. Too often, lesson plans do not identify different tasks and activities for the full range of abilities in the class. Instead all pupils work on the same task at whatever level they are able to achieve. Some pupils and parents reported that they felt the work was too easy, whilst for others the work is not sufficiently structured to enable them to make good progress. In some classes this occasionally leads to inappropriate behaviour which is not well managed. The minor disruptions during such lessons slow the pace of teaching and learning, limiting pupils' progress. Work is regularly marked, but again practices are inconsistent and do not always identify how pupils can take their learning forwards. The better practice is more common in English than in other subjects. The school is aware of this issue, but has not yet begun to address it. Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities receive skilled support from teaching assistants who provide good quality help which has a positive impact on the pupils' progress. This work makes good use of individual education plans and these are regularly updated.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

Although the school considered that the quality of the curriculum is good, in the inspectors' view it is satisfactory at all key stages. Pupils' skills in English and mathematics are being focused upon as part of the school improvement work, and science and geography are being reviewed as well. Statutory requirements are met. At present writing skills are addressed in literacy lessons, but they are less well considered in other subjects. The school is aware that the absence of an ICT suite constrains the development of this work. The school has ensured that all classes have

appropriate time for physical education with a good range of physical activities. The school has recently received an 'activemark' award. Provision of extra curricular activities, especially for the older pupils, enriches the timetabled curriculum. However such provision for the younger pupils is limited. Good use is made of visits outside school and also of visitors to the school. For example the pupils spoke enthusiastically about their experiences at an outdoor education centre and of meeting overseas teachers. Links with the community are satisfactory. They include visits to homes for the elderly and during the inspection one Christmas production was held in a local church.

There are some aspects of curriculum planning and organisation which require review. In particular pupils in Key Stage 2 receive 22 hours in lessons each week: this is below the suggested weekly minimum time of 23.5 hours. Also timetabling has produced over long lessons before and after lunch. Often the timetabled subject is not used for the whole lesson and so the management is not able to have an accurate view of the time being spent on core subjects. The amount of time allocated to English and mathematics varies both within year groups and between these.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

The staff work hard to provide good care and support for the pupils and to enhance their social and emotional development. Parents appreciate the support and care which the school provides and trust the school to care for their children. They reported that staff are very helpful in resolving any issues which have arisen. In the absence of challenging targets, pupils' guidance was formerly inadequate, but this has been addressed in the present term. It is now satisfactory although it has not yet completed its first full cycle. Most pupils are familiar with their targets for the current term and are clear about what they are aiming to achieve in their work as well as how their targets will be reached. This is a significant achievement in a short time. Each pupil has taken home a note of the school's objectives and of their individual targets. Staff have recognised that more consideration needs to be given to these targets to ensure that parents and pupils fully understand their meaning and purpose. As yet the pupils have not been given end of year or end of Key Stage targets.

Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities receive good support and outside agencies are used well to support the most vulnerable pupils. Pupils' individual needs are identified at an early stage. Supervision at breaks and lunchtimes does not always promote good behaviour effectively. Procedures including those for child protection and risk assessments are generally good, and the pupils are safe and secure.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The inspectors agree with the school's judgement that the quality of leadership and management is satisfactory. This reflects the considerable developments introduced since the start of the present term when membership of the senior leadership team

was completely changed. Whilst a significant number of innovations have been made in the short time since the start of the autumn term, these are not yet fully in place and others have yet to be introduced. The new leadership and the staff have, to their credit, worked well with the LA to introduce pupils' targets, to develop self evaluation and to put in place procedures to raise pupils' attainment. Staff recognise that their self evaluation and assessment of pupils' attainment at the start of the year require further refining. Consideration is being given to increasing the information given to parents on their children's attainment and revising the ways in which this information is given to them. At present the induction of children into the reception classes involves a varying pattern of part time attendance over the first half of the autumn term. This is a lengthy period which requires review, particularly as the great majority have already attended preschool provision on a part time or full time basis.

In the context of these changes, the school leadership and the staff are rightly anxious to preserve the many strengths which previously existed. Day-to-day management is good as is liaison with a variety of outside agencies. Extended services are being introduced including preschool day care which is supported by links with provision at a local secondary school. Staff morale is good, whilst managers now have a much more realistic view of the school's situation. Also the Governors are in a much stronger position to act as a critical friend to the school by making good use of the more detailed information now provided to them. Together with the new plans for determining the use of resources, the school now has a satisfactory capacity to improve.

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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?	4
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	3
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	No

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	4
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	4
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?	3
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3
The behaviour of learners	3
The attendance of learners	2
How well learners enjoy their education	3
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	3
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	3
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3

The quality of provision

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

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?	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	4
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?	Yes

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Stramongate Primary School

Blackhall Road

Kendal

Cumbria

LA9 4BT

06 December 2006

Dear Pupils,

Thank you for the welcome you gave Mrs Havard, Mrs Mawer and myself when we visited your school recently. We enjoyed meeting you and really appreciated the help you gave us, especially in sharing your work and ideas about the school.

We think that your teachers and the classroom assistants work very hard to help you with your work and all the other activities which the school provides. They have done well to introduce targets for your work during the autumn term and we were most impressed by how well you knew what your own targets were. We thought you behaved well especially when moving around the school and getting into the hall.

We have asked the teachers to do some things to make sure you all do as well as possible by the time you leave Year 6. These are:

- to improve the work in literacy, numeracy and science;
- to make sure that your targets for your present work are clear and challenging and that you all have clear targets to show you what you should achieve by the end of the year and the end of your key stage.

With all good wishes for your future success.

Yours sincerely,

Martin Bradley

Her Majesty's Inspector