

Ramsden Infant School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	112208
Local Authority	Cumbria
Inspection number	289203
Inspection date	19 April 2007
Reporting inspector	Lynne Read

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

Type of school	Infant
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	153
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Phil Solloway
Headteacher	Mrs Nicola Brewerton
Date of previous school inspection	1 December 2002
School address	Thwaite Street Barrow-in-Furness Cumbria LA14 1AN
Telephone number	01229 894626
Fax number	01229 894627

Age group	3–7
Inspection date	19 April 2007
Inspection number	289203

© Crown copyright 2007

Website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

- This is a small infant and nursery school, close to the centre of Barrow-in-Furness. It serves a regeneration area and is part of a local 'Excellence in Cities' initiative. The percentage of pupils who claim free school meals is much higher than usual. The vast majority of pupils are of White British backgrounds and a few have Asian heritage. A very small percentage speak English as an additional language. When they enter the Nursery, children's development is well below average. The proportion of pupils who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities is lower than average. A private facility runs in the school offering full day care for pre-nursery children.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

Ramsden Infants is an outstanding school that provides excellent value for money. From a starting point that is well below average on entry to the Nursery, pupils achieve extremely well and consistently attain above average standards at age seven. This is because teaching, the curriculum and the care, guidance and support provided are outstanding and are carefully tailored to meet pupils' learning needs.

Teaching in the Foundation Stage (Nursery and Reception classes) includes focused tuition, together with exciting opportunities for children to explore and investigate. In Years 1 and 2, there is a very fast pace to learning as teachers include a variety of practical and collaborative tasks in their lessons. From the nursery on, children are expected to take responsibility for some of their own learning, using their 'plan and do' boards. This helps to develop skills of independence, and, together with the good standards achieved, helps to equip pupils with the skills needed for life in the wider world. Pupils describe their learning as 'fun' and relish the challenges they are given. Personal and academic development is checked constantly and staff go to great lengths to reduce or eliminate any factors that might get in the way of learning.

Another important factor behind the school's success is the quality of pupils' personal development, which is outstanding. Relationships are excellent and are built on mutual respect. The outstanding curriculum promotes the all-round development of the pupils exceptionally well. The Healthy Schools Award recognises the good work in teaching pupils about healthy living. Parents express great confidence in the school. One described it as 'the rock of the community'. Parents' and pupils' views are valued and acted upon and excellent links with families, schools and outside experts contribute a great deal to pupils' learning.

Leadership and management are outstanding. The headteacher provides excellent leadership and is exceptionally well supported by the senior leadership team. Together with good support from the governors, they lead a relentless drive for excellence, continually checking on the quality of provision and outcomes in terms of pupils' academic and personal development. Attention to safety issues, including checking on the suitability of staff and helpers, is meticulous. There is no complacency in this excellent school where staff have an accurate knowledge of strengths and identify and act upon any issues very quickly. The considerable range of strengths reported at the time of the previous inspection are still evident and, because of continuous development work, the school has moved on even further. There is excellent capacity for the school to maintain this outstanding record and to enjoy continued success in the face of any challenges that may arise.

What the school should do to improve further

- There are no significant areas for improvement.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

Achievement is outstanding and standards are above average. Children have a limited range of prior learning and experiences when they enter the Nursery. They make rapid progress during the Foundation Stage. By the end of the Reception year, their attainment is around average overall, with good skills of independent working.

In the teacher assessments for 2006, standards at Year 2 were significantly above average. This reflects the pattern over the last five years where results have been consistently above average. Around one half of pupils attained the higher Level 3 in reading with approximately 30% doing so in writing and mathematics. The work seen during inspection was of an equally high standard. Pupils' abilities in reading, spelling and writing are underpinned by an excellent understanding of phonics (letters and sounds).

Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities progress also make outstanding progress. From their first days in school, especially tailored programmes help to boost the learning of pupils who need extra help. This very effective safety net is one reason why the school has a relatively low number of pupils formally identified with such difficulties and is able to maintain high standards.

Boys do better than they do nationally and are closing the gap on the girls. They benefit from a good amount of practical work and topics that are chosen to interest them. Pupils from all ethnic groups and those learning English as an additional language do equally well. The school has very good measures in place to support the younger pupils in each year group; as a result the difference in attainment between pupils with autumn and summer birthdays is very small and much lower than the national picture. Pupils with special talents have additional challenges and extra clubs to enhance their skills, for example in physical education.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils' personal development and well-being, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, are outstanding. Attendance is good; pupils say they enjoy lessons and that 'the whole school is wonderful'. The very strong emphasis on personal education in the Foundation Stage ensures that children settle quickly. Throughout school, pupils rise to the high expectations of behaviour and demonstrate good self-discipline. Visits from community workers such as the Police, fire fighters and nurses help to equip them with the life skills to stay safe. From early days in the Nursery, children are proud to discharge the responsibilities they are given, such as tidying up. Older pupils make a positive contribution to the running of the well ordered school community. This helps to prepare them extremely well for their future education and world of work.

Pupils' excellent spiritual development is supported through nature and environmental projects such as the 'Forest School' initiative. Adults provide an excellent model of care and consideration, which the pupils adopt into their own behaviour. As a result, the school is a harmonious community, free from bullying or racism. Pupils have a very good understanding of other faiths and cultures and especially enjoy singing in the home languages of their friends. They understand the benefits of a healthy diet and exercise; the after-school 'fit club' is a favourite with many.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 1

The outstanding teaching is a major factor in pupils' excellent learning. Lessons often include games, challenges or practical tasks that motivate pupils well. In the Foundation Stage, staff plan a good mixture of taught sessions alongside opportunities for children to consolidate what they learn and discover things for themselves. As a result, children become inquisitive learners.

Relationships are excellent. Frequent praise and a valued reward system encourage pupils to try hard. Information from the constant assessments of learning is used well to ensure that tasks, classroom organisation and support match pupils' needs. The grouping arrangements in Year 2 allow teachers to set exacting challenges for the more able and to provide a nurturing environment for those with less confidence. Teachers give good, continuous oral feedback in lessons so pupils are clear about how well they are doing and how they can improve their learning.

The teaching assistants have a wide range of expert skills and are very well deployed to ensure the best possible support for learning. Many dedicated parents, community members and students work in school. Detailed planning means that they are exceptionally well briefed and therefore, make a valuable contribution to learning.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The curriculum is outstanding with an exciting range of special events, visits and visitors to enrich learning and widen pupils' experiences. Many subjects are taught through themes; this helps to develop pupils' vocabulary and reinforce learning. For example, pupils wrote a set of instructions in English for making sandwiches and then tested them out in their design and technology lesson in the afternoon. A host of additional sessions are included in the curriculum to cater for groups of pupils and those with different learning styles. For example, boys' literacy is supported through the 'Super Boys' Club' and the 'Time to Talk' sessions help to boost confidence.

The excellent curriculum in the Foundation Stage ensures that learning gets off to a flying start. The outdoor areas are especially exciting places where children experiment with materials and textures, investigate the world around them and develop their physical skills.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

The care, support and guidance for pupils are seen as paramount and are outstanding. Staff work hard to ensure that health and safety procedures are followed systematically. The school has developed excellent systems of support for pupils. For example, specially trained adults run sessions to help pupils to cope with emotional or behavioural difficulties and to develop 'life skills'. Parents praised the work of the counsellor who works with them and their children to help resolve problems. The deployment of teaching assistants to cover supervision at play and lunchtimes ensures that expectations and procedures are consistent and helps to provide a sense of security for pupils. Arrangements to help the nursery children to settle into school are excellent and pupils said they had 'no worries' about moving on to Junior School.

Excellent systems for assessing and tracking pupils' progress over time are established. Assessment information is used effectively in planning lessons and this is a major factor underpinning the school's success. Excellent advice for pupils on how to improve their work, together with useful prompts and reminders in class, are very effective in helping them to achieve the very challenging targets that their teachers set.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

Leadership and management are outstanding. The headteacher provides excellent leadership, which is based firmly on the pursuit of high achievement. Working in close partnership with senior leaders, she promotes excellent teamwork and a shared vision in school. A very good training programme ensures that staff are able to respond to change and new challenges. Through their excellent evaluation procedures, staff and governors have a clear idea of what needs to be done and produce detailed annual action plans to guide the work. Their own cautious evaluation of the school's performance was lower than the inspection outcomes. Although the strengths were identified, the excellent progress made by the pupils was not given sufficient weight against the few minor areas targeted for development.

The learning environment is very stimulating, administration is highly effective and standards of maintenance and cleanliness are high. These factors reflect a shared sense of pride among all adults at the school. The governors are a committed and highly supportive group. They work closely with the headteacher, staff and parents in decision making. Following some changes to the governing body, a new training programme is being developed to ensure that all governors are up-to-date with educational developments and legislation.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaints about school inspection', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

Annex A

Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	School Overall
--	-----------------------

Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	1
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

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

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	1
The behaviour of learners	1
The attendance of learners	2
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
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?	1
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1

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?	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1
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

20 April 2007

Dear Children

Inspection of Ramsden Infant School, Cumbria, LA14 1AN

Thank you very much for all those lovely smiles and for helping me when I came to visit your school. I would like to tell you what I found out.

Ramsden Infants is a very happy and exciting school. Your behaviour is excellent and you take really good care of each other. Your teachers and families can be proud of you. Your headteacher and the staff work very hard to make sure you are safe. You like your teachers, enjoy your lessons and try hard. You spoke with great enthusiasm about the clubs after school, the special projects you have been involved in and the visits you have made. Well done! You are taking very good advantage of all that the school offers. Please thank your parents for sending us lots of replies to the questionnaire. They are very pleased with the school. They especially like the way that your teachers care for you and are very pleased with the rapid progress you make.

You make an excellent start to your education in the Nursery and Reception classes and learn a lot. I was impressed with the very good reading and writing in the Reception class and the way that the children worked with numbers in the Nursery. Once you move into the infants, you are confident and independent and eager to learn more. You continue to make excellent progress so that your reading, writing and mathematics work is better than in most schools by the end of Year 2. You can help to maintain the high standards and friendliness in school by continuing to work hard and being so cheery and helpful.

Thank you once again for the interesting conversations I had and for letting me know your views so clearly. Please accept my best wishes for the future.

Yours sincerely

Mrs Lynne Read

Lead Inspector