



Newtown Community Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 112218
Local Authority Cumbria
Inspection number 289206
Inspection dates 6–7 December 2006
Reporting inspector Dave Byrne

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Newtown Road
School category	Community		Carlisle, Cumbria
Age range of pupils	3–11		CA2 7LW
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01228 607551
Number on roll (school)	91	Fax number	01228 607552
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Mr Allan Blackett
		Headteacher	Mrs Jane Blacklock
Date of previous school inspection	1 October 2001		

Age group 3–11	Inspection dates 6–7 December 2006	Inspection number 289206
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

This is a small school, which serves an area of high social and economic deprivation and a high proportion of pupils, over half, are eligible for free school meals. The number of pupils on roll has halved in the last few years because many families in the area were relocated as a result of a local regeneration scheme. Many pupils join or leave the school during the course of the school year, particularly in Key Stage 2. The attainment of most children starting school in the Foundation Stage is very low and well below what is typical for their age. A very high percentage of them have learning difficulties and disabilities, including an exceptionally large proportion with statements of special educational need. In Key Stage 2, for example, almost two thirds of pupils have learning difficulties and disabilities. Almost all pupils are of White British background and none are at an early stage of learning English. Since September 2006, the school's deputy headteacher has acted as headteacher, supported by the previous headteacher working part-time as a consultant. A Children's Centre is located on the same site.

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 with some outstanding features. It has excellent links with its community; works tirelessly to support local families through the Children's Centre and provides access for them to resources such as the school's sports hall and computer facilities. Good leadership and management have created a strong and dedicated staff team that provides outstanding quality of care, guidance and support. As a result, the life chances of the vast majority of pupils are significantly improved. They learn to manage their own behaviour and build positive attitudes to life.

Most parents are very supportive. As one said, 'The school treats the children and parents with respect and kindness. They work with us, sharing ideas for managing behaviour and education.' This inclusion of parents in the school's work makes a significant difference to pupils' academic and personal development. Innovative ideas support the personal development of all pupils; for example, the school's 'Quiet Place' is an oasis of tranquillity and peace that gives pupils an opportunity to reflect on their actions. This is one of the reasons why the school is a calm place in which good behaviour is usual and pupils enjoy learning. Occasional incidents of aggressive behaviour are dealt with sensitively and in a way that helps pupils to learn how to communicate more successfully.

Pupils have a good understanding of the benefits of keeping healthy, fit and safe. They love helping others and are proud of the way they influence decision-making through the school council. In lessons, however, pupils lack independence and have a very limited ability to act on their own. Many of them have weak speaking skills and this impedes their ability to participate in discussion and debate. Absence is high as a result of the social problems of some families. The school does all it can to monitor and improve attendance and works closely with educational and health professionals to reduce absence.

Pupils' achievement is good. Good teaching results in pupils' good progress from their very low attainment on admission to the school. Good provision in the Foundation Stage gives pupils a good start to school. Despite good progress, children attain below nationally expected levels by the time they enter Year 1. Pupils continue to make good progress in Key Stage 1 and reach broadly average standards by the time they are ready to join Key Stage 2. The results of the national tests in Key Stage 1 have improved over the past four years. Standards are rising because of more effective teaching. By the end of Year 6, pupils also make good progress given their starting points in Year 3 and on admission to the school mid-key stage. However, standards are still below average but improving. Exceptionally good provision for pupils with emotional, behavioural and learning difficulties (the majority in Key Stage 2) means that they achieve well and benefit from excellent inclusion. The more able pupils' achievement, however, is only satisfactorily and they could do better.

The curriculum meets statutory requirements, but lacks excitement and is not planned well enough to develop the pupils' speaking and listening skills, their independence in learning or to apply their basic skills to new situations.

Leadership and management are good. The new leadership team is managing the school well. A lot of time is unavoidably taken up helping pupils and parents with specific difficulties but the excellent support of the staff team and the school administrator makes sure that the school runs like clockwork. Governance is satisfactory and benefits from the good leadership of the chair of governors. The main challenge for governors is to resolve the school's long-standing budget deficit that resulted from the dramatic cut in the number of pupils on roll three years ago.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards in English, mathematics and science in Key Stage 2, especially for the more able pupils.
- Improve the planning of the curriculum to develop the pupils' speaking skills and independence.
- Resolve the budget deficit.
- Improve pupils' attendance rate.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Achievement is good, showing good progress from the very low attainment of most pupils on entry. The high levels of pupil mobility and the very high percentage of pupils with learning, behavioural and emotional difficulties means that all assessment data needs interpreting carefully. In the Foundation Stage, many pupils have very limited use of language, and poor levels of mathematical development and knowledge and understanding of the world. Good provision in the Nursery and Reception improves pupils' attainment well but, despite good progress, most remain below the levels expected for their age by the end of Reception.

In Key Stages 1 and 2, good progress continues. Standards are rising steadily in Key Stage 1 and the results of the national tests in 2005 were broadly average in reading, writing and mathematics. Results in 2006 were similar. This steady improvement is, in turn, raising standards in the lower part of Key Stage 2 but has not had an effect on results in Year 6. The test results have fallen steadily over recent years and were well below average in English, mathematics and science in 2005. The high percentage of pupils with learning, behavioural and emotional difficulties and the high proportion joining the school in Key Stage 2 were key factors in the low results. Pupils' speaking skills are well below average and not targeted sufficiently well by the school for improvement. In 2006, the school did well to achieve the targets set, taking into account the low attainment of the pupils at the start of Year 6. However, standards were not at nationally expected levels. The progress of pupils with learning difficulties is good across the school as a result of excellent provision. The small number of more able pupils, however, could do better.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' personal development and well-being, and their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are good. Pupils are friendly and polite for most of the time although individuals occasionally display aggressive behaviour. In Reception, pupils buzzed with excitement when given the challenge of designing and making a hat for their doll but expectations for pupils to act independently are not generally high enough across the school. This reduces pupils' enthusiasm and motivation, particularly the more able ones. The popularity of the healthy tuck shop and the access pupils have to drinking water demonstrate the pupils' commitment to healthy eating. Good provision for physical education has improved pupils' awareness of the importance of keeping fit. Pupils talk with pride about their school council and feel that they are now have a sense of ownership of their school. Attendance is well below average, partly as a result of difficulties experienced by a small number of families and holidays taken in term time. Action taken by the school and the educational welfare officer has led to a reduction in the rate of absence in recent years. The school prepares pupils satisfactorily for their next stage of education and their good personal skills provide a good foundation for future learning.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are good resulting in pupils making good progress. Lessons are generally well organised and managed. The good rapport between staff and pupils contributes to good behaviour. A skilled team of teaching assistants ensures that the needs of pupils with learning, behavioural and emotional difficulties are extremely well met. In the Foundation Stage, pupils get a good start; an effective teaching team identifies the needs of each child and provides a lively and exciting range of learning activities. These are carefully planned to develop personal and academic skills and to improve pupils' knowledge and understanding of the world. In Key Stages 1 and 2, good emphasis is given to improving pupil's skills of literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT) but at times teachers' expectations and their planned provision does not fully develop pupils' independent learning skills, such as in problem solving in mathematics and science. This leads to slower progress in Key Stage 2, particularly by the more able pupils. Standards are rising across the school because teachers are making good use of assessment. This includes involving pupils in their own evaluations as well as using data more effectively to target teaching and learning and to track pupils. Marking is generally effective in guiding improvements in pupils' work and homework is used well to complement lessons. Some pupils lack support at home, however, despite the excellent efforts made by the school to involve parents in their children's learning.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum is satisfactory. It meets the needs of most pupils but lacks excitement and fails to plan for pupils to apply their basic skills to new situations. It is extremely effective in providing for those with learning, behavioural and emotional difficulties. The curriculum in the Foundation Stage is good and well matched to the needs of younger learners. In Key Stages 1 and 2, a good emphasis is given to developing basic skills of speaking, reading, writing, numeracy and ICT in discrete subject lessons. Weaknesses in planning reduce opportunities for pupils to apply these basic skills to other subjects or to develop skills of independence and taking responsibility for their learning. The energy of pupils shown in the dance club, typified their enthusiastic response to after-school clubs. Educational visits within the locality, such as participating in the hat-making project at a local museum, successfully broaden pupils' experiences and knowledge of the world. Good provision for personal, social and health education and citizenship develops positive attitudes to issues such as relationships, the safe use of drugs and ways of keeping safe, healthy and fit.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Care, guidance and support are outstanding. Pastoral care is excellent and ensures that pupils feel safe at all times. The school works tirelessly to support and work with parents. To quote just one parent, 'The school caters excellently for the needs of pupils, using innovative ideas'. An example of this is the 'Quiet Place', which has a marked impact on pupils' personal development. Behaviour is very well managed within a caring ethos. Child protection is rigorously maintained and pupils' health and safety has a very high priority. All adults working in school are checked according to national guidance. The school works very well with parents and other agencies to reduce absence and manage a wide variety of social issues. Good systems for tracking pupils' academic progress help teachers to identify difficulties early and to remedy any slippage in progress. Throughout the school, pupils understand their targets for mathematics and English. Children with learning, behavioural or emotional difficulties have outstanding levels of care and support, which enables them to be fully included in all aspects of school life.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good. The new senior management team provide a good vision for the school's development and ensure good inclusion. School self-evaluation is generally accurate although not all staff are secure in their own role in monitoring standards and provision in the school. Very good use is made of assessment data, coupled with other information, to identify relevant targets for school improvement. Performance management systems for all staff contribute effectively

to the school's educational direction. As a result, academic standards and progress are rising steadily. The provision for pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities is excellent but not enough thought is given to the provision for the more able. The governing body is led by a strong, visionary chair of governors. It is supportive of the school and has successfully gained significant extra grant-funding. As a result, some of the school's facilities are exceptional. The sports hall is a very useful resource, for example, not only for the school, but also for the community. The budget has not recovered yet from the dramatic reduction in pupil numbers resulting from urban regeneration. Despite judicious reductions in staffing the deficit remains high. This means that, even though the school has improved since the last inspection, its capacity for further improvement is only satisfactory.

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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?	1
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	2
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	Yes

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
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	4
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	3

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?	3
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.

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	3
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	3
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

Newtown Community Primary School

Newtown Road

Carlisle

Cumbria

CA2 7LW

8 December 2006

Dear Pupils

Thank you very much for the very friendly welcome you gave me when I visited your school. I thoroughly enjoyed finding out about the work you do, and a special thanks to those who talked with me about the school. You are correct in your judgement that Newtown is a good school.

There were lots of things that I liked about you and your school. The way you care for others and show concern if they need help, the pleasure in your faces in lessons and the great pride you have in the school council and in your school generally. You behave well and it is good to know that if you have difficulties managing your own behaviour you have excellent support from your teachers and other adults. You told me that you feel safe and well cared for and that is the case. The school does a superb job helping all of you to behave well and the Quiet Place is amazing...every school should have one!

It is good to see that not only does the school care for you personally but also helps you to learn. Even though many of you find learning difficult, the excellent support you get means that most of you do really well in improving your reading, writing, mathematics and science. At times though, some of you could do better, and I have asked the school to give some of you harder but still enjoyable work and also to give you more chances to discuss and debate during lessons. I feel that the way most of you know your targets for improving your learning has boosted the standard of your work but at times I think you could all do more to think and act on your own in lessons. Although you enjoy school, I have suggested to the school that it makes lessons even more exciting by joining subjects together. This would give you more chances to practise your skills of reading, writing, mathematics and ICT. Also, some of you will improve your work if you attend school more regularly.

You are lucky to go to such a caring school. You are the most important people in it so I hope you all continue to help your teachers so that you can get the best out of life. There two old sayings that I would like you to think about, 'You get out of life what you put into it' and another is, 'If you give nothing, you get nothing back!' You are all very giving and, by your hard work, you are putting lots in. If you always do that, you will always be happy and healthy...keep up the good work!

Yours sincerely

David Byrne (Lead Inspector)