



Sir John Barrow School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 112232
Local Authority Cumbria
Inspection number 289210
Inspection dates 13–14 February 2007
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	Argyle Street
School category	Community		Ulverston, Cumbria
Age range of pupils	7–11		LA12 0BD
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01229 894130
Number on roll (school)	233	Fax number	01229 894131
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Mrs Jean Wilkinson
		Headteacher	Mrs Gillian Cooke
Date of previous school inspection	1 June 2002		

Age group 7–11	Inspection dates 13–14 February 2007	Inspection number 289210
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

The school is situated in a mixed community, which includes areas of social and economic disadvantage. The school serves two main infant schools. Overall, attainment on entry to school is varied but is broadly average for the pupils' age. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities is above average. Virtually all pupils are White British and very few have English as an additional language. A slightly more than average number of pupils are eligible for a free school meal. An approved club offers after school care for a few pupils. In 2005, following a period of staff changes, due to retirement and illness, the current management team was established with the appointment of two assistant headteachers and the headteacher.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

This school provides a satisfactory quality of education with several good features. After a difficult time of change, the staff team is more settled. Effective leadership from the headteacher has raised morale as behaviour has improved and the new buildings have created a real pride in the school. Parents are very pleased with the education their children receive. One parent summed this up as, 'Everybody seems to have a strong sense of team and the children take huge pride in their school.'

Overall, achievement is satisfactory. The results of national tests at the end of Year 6 show standards are broadly average. Science is the strongest subject with pupils making good progress and standards are above average because a good proportion of pupils exceed the level expected for their age. Although standards in English are broadly average, writing is a weakness and pupils show little enthusiasm for writing. An average number of pupils reach the higher level (Level 5) in English and mathematics. Nevertheless, a few more able pupils have the potential to reach the higher level and do not make enough progress.

Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall, with some good lessons. Practical activities in science and the introduction to numeracy lessons lead to effective learning. Expectations are not always high enough to sustain pupils' interest and some tasks, especially in writing, lack sufficient challenge. Pupils are very interested in the rich curriculum provided for them. Parents are especially appreciative of the number and variety of extra-curricular activities.

Personal development is good. Pupils enjoy school and attendance is often above average. Behaviour is good. Pupils have a strong sense of contributing to the school and local community. They have played a major role in activities to renovate the local Hoad Monument. This is a caring school. Pupils say they feel safe because they know who to turn to if they have a problem. Teachers are good at rewarding endeavour. This increases pupils' self-esteem and is especially beneficial for the pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities. Pupils know how to keep healthy and are especially energetic at break time. They are well prepared for the future.

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The headteacher provides good leadership and ensures that this is a calm place for learning. This enables the school to turn its attention to raising achievement. Improved systems to assess and track pupils' progress mean the school knows the areas requiring attention. However, not enough use is made of this information when deciding the priorities, which will have the most impact on standards. Nevertheless, the school is very much a team working together to raise standards. All are united by their new mission statement 'The SJB team- succeeding, enjoying and belonging.' Consequently, the school has a good capacity to improve.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards in writing, throughout the school.
- Ensure that all of the more able pupils reach the level of which they are capable in English and mathematics.

- Evaluate assessment information more thoroughly to identify the key priorities to help improve standards.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Pupils' achievement is satisfactory. From an average starting point many make satisfactory progress and leave the school with broadly average standards. Progress is good in science and standards are above average with a good proportion of pupils reaching the higher level (Level 5). This is because of the focus on investigation and the challenge for pupils to test out their own ideas. Most of the more able pupils reach Level 5 in English and mathematics but not all of them, and these pupils could make more progress. Across the school, standards in writing are below average and pupils lack enthusiasm for writing. Teachers are overcoming this with more imaginative approaches but there is a lack of consistency in what is expected of pupils and in some cases expectations are not high enough. Standards are improving and the school reached its 2006 target.

Pupils who have learning difficulties and disabilities and the few with English as an additional language make good progress especially in their personal and social development, which is the main concern for many of these pupils. The trend in achievement shows no significant difference between boys and girls. However, girls show less enthusiasm for learning and the school organises more visits and visitors to make learning more relevant for them.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

This is a happy school because personal development is good. Pupils enjoy their education and this is reflected in their above average attendance. They say they feel safe and secure and know who to approach if they have a concern. They appreciate the opportunity to talk privately if they raise a concern in the worry box. Behaviour is good. Staff effectively manage the small group of pupils who display challenging behaviour. The school has achieved Activemark and Healthy School's status and this is reflected in pupils' good understanding of keeping fit and healthy. Close links with the local community effectively teach pupils about citizenship. They know it is important to act responsibly and many carry out important duties around school or as school counsellors. Support for others is very clear in the generous amount raised for charity.

Pupils' spiritual, social, moral and cultural development is good. Pupils abide by the Children's Charter, which has a positive effect on their social and moral development. They are polite to visitors and supportive of each other.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall with some good lessons. Teachers often use imaginative resources to get across their messages more forcefully. For example, in history the teacher had weighed out the correct rations people could have during the war so that pupils could see for themselves how difficult times were. Pupils enjoy role play, which makes learning fun. Effective management enables pupils to learn in an orderly environment. Teachers prepare lessons well, with a planned sequence of tasks to enable lessons to run smoothly. In literacy lessons, too much focus on the completion of the tasks leads to pupils being unclear about what they are learning. This affects standards in writing because pupils fail to retain or transfer their skills to their independent writing. Expectations in literacy and numeracy are not always high enough for the more able pupils and some find their work too easy. Marking is good and often tells pupils how they can improve their work. The teaching of pupils with learning difficulties is good because they have detailed individual education plans and effective support from teaching assistants.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

A very positive aspect of the curriculum is the focus on personal and social development. This improves pupils' attitude to learning and enables them to take full advantage of all that is offered. The school has sustained a careful balance between academic and creative development. This is evident in pupils' enthusiastic singing and imaginative artwork. Teachers add interest to the year by devoting a week to one specific subject. This has resolved the previous weakness in design and technology and work shows good attention to design and evaluation. There is good provision for pupils with learning difficulties who are fully included in all activities. However, the school is at the early stages of providing for pupils identified as specially gifted or talented. The school has recently introduced French to enrich the curriculum. Currently, this is restricted to Year 3 and older pupils said they would also like this opportunity in preparation for the next school.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

This is a caring school and staff know the pupils very well and are fully committed to their welfare. The school carries out health and safety checks on a regular basis and risk assessments are fully in place. Safeguarding procedures are also in place. Partnerships with external agencies are particularly good and are especially beneficial for pupils with learning difficulties and the more vulnerable pupils. Individual counselling and anger management sessions enable them learn how to deal with their difficulties.

Effective systems to monitor pupils' progress are in place. The school can now spot underachievement earlier and provide additional support. The focus has been more on the lower achieving pupils and the school has now turned its attention to assessing and providing for the more gifted and talented pupils. Pupils have literacy and numeracy targets but these are not referred to enough in lessons to remind pupils how to improve.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The headteacher is a good leader and her determination to return the school to its previous high standards has earned her the respect of all. On her appointment, she correctly identified the need to raise staff morale. This has been accomplished most effectively by establishing an orderly working environment. Following an initial dip, the school has made good progress since its last inspection.

The school's self-evaluation of what is happening in school is satisfactory. In some areas, it is too positive because of the focus on provision rather than the impact changes are having on pupils' achievement. This is also a weakness in subject leaders' action plans and the school's management plan and leads to the inclusion of too many targets which are not always the key ones which will raise standards. The new senior management team are well aware of the need to adjust these plans and have all the required information to accomplish these adjustments. Governance is satisfactory. Governors are very supportive and kept well informed about what is happening in school although they do not play a full role in the early decision making process. They fully endorse the school's focus on equality of opportunity for its pupils.

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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?	3
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
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?	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3
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	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?	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?	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	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	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

Sir John Barrow School

Argyle Street

Ulverston

Cumbria

LA12 0BD

15 February 2007

Dear Pupils

Many thanks for the warm welcome you gave us when we recently visited your school. We enjoyed our visit and your friendliness and willingness to tell us about your school has helped us to write this report. Your parents are correct that this is a happy and caring school. You help to make it this way by your good attendance and the way you behave and work hard. We are pleased you feel safe and know the importance of keeping healthy. It was good to see how much you enjoyed your healthy school dinners. The amount of money you raise for charity is impressive and shows how eagerly you support others.

We know that the staff and governors are very keen to keep the school improving. You do really well in science but we think some of you could work harder especially in writing and mathematics. You do not always present your work neatly and this is something you could easily improve.

You told us how much you enjoy your school plays and parents thought your concert last Christmas was brilliant. We are sure this is just one of the many happy memories you will have of your time at Sir John Barrow School. We wish you well for the future.

Yours sincerely,

Mrs J E Platt and Mrs J Havard

Inspectors