

George Romney Junior School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	112234
Local Authority	Cumbria
Inspection number	289211
Inspection date	19 April 2007
Reporting inspector	Geoffrey Yates

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

Type of school	Junior
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	7–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	192
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Joy Rushton
Headteacher	Mrs Lynne McGaw
Date of previous school inspection	1 February 2002
School address	Cobden Street Dalton-in-Furness Cumbria LA15 8SE
Telephone number	01229 897917
Fax number	01229 897918

Age group	7–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

The school is of an average size for junior schools nationally. It serves an area of mostly private terraced housing with a significant proportion living in rented or local authority accommodation situated in the town centre of Dalton. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is slightly above average. A below average proportion of pupils receives free school meals. There are no pupils at an early stage of learning to speak English. Overall attainment on entry to school is above average. The school has won many awards, including the Sports Active award and Healthy Schools award.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

This is an outstanding school where all pupils do exceedingly well. Its self-evaluation is accurate. The overwhelming majority of parents are very happy with what the school provides. One parent commented, 'My daughter has improved in so many ways, academically yes but also in her confidence and her eagerness to go to school.' The key reasons for the school's success are outstanding leadership and management, highly effective teaching and learning and a curriculum and other activities that meet the range of pupils' interests fully. These, together with the high quality care, guidance and support and major emphasis placed on nurturing pupils' personal, social and emotional skills, motivate the pupils to learn very well.

Pupils come into the school in Year 3 with above average standards overall. The school builds impressively on this and as a result pupils make outstanding progress. For example, over the last three years the school has been in the top 2% nationally for the very high level of value added it provides. Pupils attain overall standards that are significantly above the expected levels at the end of Year 6 in English, mathematics and science. The overall percentage of pupils achieving the higher levels in all three subjects is around twice the national average. Pupils achieve very well because of high quality teaching that ensures that they are continually challenged to improve on their previous best. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make excellent progress because their specific learning needs are very well targeted.

The pupils are very aware of the need to lead a healthy lifestyle and understand the reasons why the school encourages them to bring 'healthy' packed lunches and to take part in sporting activities. Pupils like school and attendance is above the national average. They demonstrate a high degree of self-confidence and self-esteem, which enables them to behave very well and really enjoy the wide range of opportunities the school provides. The many after-school clubs, including a knitting club led by elderly members of the local community, enhance not only pupils' skills but also their level of involvement in the local community. The curriculum meets pupils' needs exceptionally well through carefully tailored provision that makes learning very interesting. For example, information and communication technology (ICT) is an integral part of the curriculum and used to help pupils learn in many different subjects. The excellent level of care, guidance and support received by the pupils assists them in becoming articulate individuals with a very good understanding of themselves and others. For example, staff use praise carefully to develop their confidence to speak in front of an audience. Pupils say they feel very safe in school and know there is someone to talk to if they have a problem.

The headteacher's constant search for ways to improve the school is the mainspring of the school's success. She involves the leadership team and governors successfully in ensuring that pupils receive the best possible education. The school's very thorough and highly accurate checks on its own performance help it to see clearly where it can be still better. The school's leaders then plan and implement well designed changes without losing what is of a high quality already in the school. This has resulted in excellent improvement since the previous inspection when overall results were broadly average and achievement was satisfactory. The capacity for further improvement is outstanding and the school provides outstanding value for money.

What the school should do to improve further

- There are no significant areas for improvement.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

Pupils' achievement is outstanding and standards are high throughout the school because of high quality teaching. There are no significant differences between the achievement of boys and girls. The most able pupils do particularly well. From an above average level of attainment when they start school in Year 3, pupils progress rapidly. By the end of Year 6, excellent progress ensures that standards in English, mathematics and science are very high, with a large proportion exceeding the expectations for their age. Results have risen rapidly since the previous inspection. Over the last three years, progress made by pupils places the school in the top 2% of all schools. Very good provision for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities ensures that they make excellent progress in relation to their starting points.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils' personal development and well-being are outstanding because the school has made this aspect central to its work. Each aspect of the 'Every Child Matters' agenda has a skilled member of staff responsible for it and as such no stone is unturned in ensuring that pupils receive maximum benefit from the work the school does to help with pupils' personal development. The outcome is that pupils have very positive attitudes to learning and really enjoy their work. Pupils willingly take on responsibilities; for example, school council members play a part in the running of 'their' school. They enjoy excellent relationships with each other, showing respect and care for their classmates. Pupils are confident and are active in many initiatives; working as playground leaders, for example, and raising funds for charities. Pupils have a very good knowledge of how to keep fit and make healthy lifestyle choices. For example, they choose healthy options from the tuck shop and take regular exercise in physical education lessons and after school sports. They think highly of their school and their behaviour is excellent. Determined action by the school ensures that pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent; for example, pupils benefit from visits, such as the one to the Jewish museum in Manchester, to develop further their knowledge of cultures different from their own. Pupils say they really enjoy participating in an extensive range of sporting activities, including tournaments in which they frequently successful. They develop the key skills that will prepare them very well for the future. These include confident use of ICT and some exceptionally good numeracy skills.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 1

Teachers and pupils have very high expectations for learning, as a result lessons move at a very fast pace. This is the key to the outstanding progress pupils make. Planning for lessons is structured very well so that pupils' learning is taken forward from a clear understanding of what they already know and can do. Pupils benefit from working in ability groups in mathematics as demonstrated by the school's outstanding results. Excellent relationships that help pupils become conscientious and keen learners lie at the heart of teaching. For example, in one lesson, pupils responded well to a group task to extend the quality of their writing with one pupil in the group acting as a scribe recording other pupils' excellent, well thought out ideas. Teachers

have very good subject knowledge and their planning takes full account of assessment information to match work very well to pupils' needs. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities have very carefully monitored programmes of support that help them make excellent progress. Teaching assistants support pupils very well. Teachers use resources, such as ICT, very effectively to capture pupils' imagination and make learning fun. Teachers' marking makes pupils increasingly aware of their own attainment and explains how they can improve their work.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

Well planned programmes of work are a key feature of the curriculum. Art and design and ICT are major strengths alongside the school's well planned curriculum for English, mathematics and science. There are good curriculum links with the infant school and the local high school. There is a very thorough, well planned programme of personal, social and health education. The school has recently reviewed curriculum provision in its never-ending quest to provide what is best for all pupils. The creation of 'twenty minute time' as part of the daily morning session allows pupils to experience a range of activities, such as 'brain gym', that help to ensure that learning is enjoyable. Pupils are provided with some excellent opportunities to use their writing skills in other subjects; for example, pupils keep a written diary of good quality as part of a history project linked to the Second World War. The curriculum is enhanced through an excellent range of activities after school, including a wide range of sporting activities. Residential visits are looked forward to and provide pupils with the valuable experience of life in environments different from their own.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

All staff show a high degree of commitment to the pupils in their care. High quality, positive relationships between staff and pupils ensure that pupils feel safe and that there is someone to turn to if help is needed. The individual education plans for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities have clearly focused areas for improvement that, together with implementation by very skilled support staff, enables them to make excellent progress. Parents are overwhelmingly supportive of the school and feel, in particular, that it takes good care of their children. The school has all necessary measures in place to safeguard pupils and to ensure that health and safety issues receive the highest priority. Excellent assessment systems give staff a very clear picture of how well their pupils are progressing. They provide valuable information for planning learning for pupils of all abilities, including those who are gifted and talented. Pupils are involved in evaluating how well they are doing and know how to improve their work.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

Leadership and management are outstanding. The highly skilled headteacher has ensured that the school has moved from strength to strength. Her vision for continual school improvement is shared by the deputy headteacher and all members of staff. All aspects of leadership and management focus on maintaining what is best in the school and improving where necessary. For example, despite above average results, the school used its resources effectively to

successfully improve pupils' writing standards. The headteacher, staff and governors form a dedicated team, thoroughly committed to offering equal opportunities for all pupils to receive the best possible quality of education. Most parents feel their views are listened to and an outside agency has been used effectively to gather the views of parents. The roles of subject leaders are very good and time is provided for them to carry out their responsibilities. Very good governance provides a high level of informed challenge and supports the work of the school. The very small number of issues from the previous report has been addressed successfully. Tightly focused improvement plans look ahead to further developments planned for future years. The school is in a position of considerable strength to improve even further.

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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
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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?	1
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	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	1
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	1
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 George Romney Junior School, Cumbria, LA15 8SE

Thank you for the friendly welcome you all gave me when I visited the school recently. I really enjoyed my time with you and seeing some of you in lessons, even if it was only for a short time.

I promised the school council that I would let you know what I thought. I am pleased to tell you that your school is one of the very best I have been in and that you attend a really outstanding school. You do outstandingly well in lessons and in tests because you work hard and understand the importance of this for the future. I agree with you that your teachers and other adults make lessons very interesting and that if you need help you get it.

Your behaviour is excellent and I was very impressed with how polite you were. You were all very busy and active at lunchtime and you benefit from large playgrounds and many after-school clubs. You told me that you feel safe in school and that if problems occur an adult will sort it out quickly when you tell them about it. The school council is very busy on your behalf and members enjoy being able to take new things forward to make life better for you.

Keep on working hard and as a result you can continue to play a major part in ensuring that, just like the Cumbrian artist your school is named after, your school continues to be highly regarded by all who come into contact with it.

Yours sincerely

Geoffrey Yates

Lead Inspector