



# Houghton C of E School

## Inspection Report

**Unique Reference Number** 112250  
**Local Authority** Cumbria  
**Inspection number** 289218  
**Inspection dates** 6–7 February 2007  
**Reporting inspector** Eric Jackson

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Primary	<b>School address</b>	Jackson Road
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary controlled		Houghton, Carlisle
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–11		Cumbria, CA3 0PA
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed	<b>Telephone number</b>	01228 607565
<b>Number on roll (school)</b>	117	<b>Fax number</b>	01228 607564
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body	<b>Chair</b>	Rev Simon Austen
		<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs Lisa Bird
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	1 November 2001		

<b>Age group</b>	<b>Inspection dates</b>	<b>Inspection number</b>
4–11	6–7 February 2007	289218

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

## Description of the school

This is a smaller than average primary school. The majority of pupils are White British. About 22% of pupils are from the Traveller community, some settled, from a site close to the school. As many of these pupils move from time-to-time with their families, changes to the school population during the year are much higher than in most schools. There is also a very small proportion of pupils of other minority ethnic or mixed heritage. All are English speakers. Few pupils take free school meals. Children's attainment on entry to Reception is broadly average, but covers a wide range. The number of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is broadly average.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 3

This is a satisfactory but improving school. Most parents are happy with what it offers, saying that it is a very caring and effective small village school. The staff make every effort to ensure that all pupils, no matter their background, have equal access to all the school's learning opportunities. There are strengths in pupils' personal development, effective partnerships with other schools, good provision in Reception, and in the wide range of enrichment activities. Teaching and learning in Key Stage 1 and upper Key Stage 2 are also good, but there are weaknesses in teaching at lower Key Stage 2 that slow pupils' learning.

Standards in Year 6 are average, and pupils' achievement is satisfactory. Results in national tests vary year-on-year as numbers are small, and are also affected by significant pupil movement during the year: comparisons with other schools should be made with caution. For example, Year 6 results were significantly above average in 2005, especially in English and science, but average in 2006, with English falling below average. Pupils from the Traveller community who attend regularly achieve well, as do those pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The proportion of pupils reaching higher levels is below average in English and mathematics. In Year 2, attainment is variable, but is usually just above average, especially in reading. Pupils currently make good progress, except in lower Key Stage 2, where progress is mostly satisfactory but sometimes inadequate. Across the school, pupils' written work is often carelessly presented.

Pupils' personal development and well-being are good. They enjoy school and take their class and school-wide responsibilities seriously. Pupils make a good contribution to the school, parish and local communities, being involved in local projects and presenting concerts for elderly residents. They learn safety rules and develop a good understanding of healthy lifestyles, many of them walking or cycling to school. Their behaviour is good, although there are reportedly occasional disagreements between groups of older pupils at lunchtime. Pupils' attitudes to learning are positive, and the effective relationships fostered between parents, staff and pupils help to maintain a good working atmosphere. Staff care for pupils well, and guidance and support are satisfactory. Child protection and safeguarding procedures meet requirements.

Leadership and management are satisfactory, but signs of improvement are reflected in the school's sound self-evaluation and in the well-focused school improvement plan. The recently appointed headteacher has already instigated significant changes, particularly in staffing. With the support of the local authority and the governing body, she has also negotiated a two-year financial strategy to eliminate a large budget deficit, which she inherited. Other key staff and governors make a satisfactory contribution to leadership and management. Whilst the school does not have as many good aspects as reported at the last inspection, it is now in a strong position to move forward.

### What the school should do to improve further

- Increase the proportion of pupils reaching higher levels in English and mathematics.

- Improve the quality of teaching and learning in lower Key Stage 2.
- Raise the whole school's expectations of pupils' written presentation of their work.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 3**

Achievement is satisfactory and standards are average overall. Reception children are challenged to learn at the right level for them because the provision is good so they learn at a fast rate. By the end of Reception, most pupils reach the goals set for their learning and their attainment is at the nationally expected level. Standards are just above average in Year 2 and pupils make good progress, especially in reading. In the 2006 national tests for Year 6 pupils, the school met its targets in English and mathematics. Standards in Year 6 are average and pupils' achievement is satisfactory overall, despite having made good progress in the last two years last year and this. This is because progress is not as good in Years 3 and 4 and pupils have some catching up to do. Pupils from the Traveller community achieve well by Year 6, as do those pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities, because of good quality support. Unusually, boys in Year 6 did better than girls in 2006, but generally boys and girls make similar progress. Throughout the school, some more able pupils do not do as well as they should.

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 2**

Pupils' personal development and well-being are good. There are strengths in pupils' attitudes to learning and their concentration and effort in lessons. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. The school's Christian mission is clear in the joy and reverence in pupils' singing of a good range of lively hymns. A number of parents expressed concerns about behaviour in the playground, but inspection evidence found behaviour to be good. Some pupils were bored when lessons were slow, but did not misbehave. Pupils say that there is occasional disagreement between groups of older pupils at lunchtime, but the school is aware of this and has effective strategies to deal with incidents as they arise. The school has embraced the national drive to ensure that pupils enjoy their learning, grow as effective members of the community, and learn how to live healthily. The awards of Healthy School status and the Activemark for sports and physical education underline how effectively this commitment affects the pupils. Parents say that pupils are well equipped for the next stage of life by Year 6. The inspection finds this preparation satisfactory. Attendance is below average, but is remarkably good, given that many pupils are absent for lengthy periods when travelling.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 3**

Teaching and learning are satisfactory, leading to achievement as expected for most pupils by Year 6. Marking and assessment are sound, and there are plans to further improve procedures. There is good teaching currently in Reception, and in the mixed age Year 1/2 and Year 5/6 classes. Here, lessons are effectively planned to match the wide range of needs of different groups. In these classes, pupils are appropriately challenged and make good progress. Most higher attaining pupils are challenged well; for example, in Reception number work, in Year 2 research using advanced texts, and when Year 6 make a personalised 'Torah' in their study of Judaism. Similarly, those pupils needing extra support usually have tasks and activities that help them make progress in small steps towards their targets. Skilled teaching assistants make a good contribution to the learning of these pupils. In lower Key Stage 2, lessons are not always well organised, the pace is sometimes slow, and planning does not always meet different pupils' needs. The school is aware of these weaknesses and has strategies in place to support better learning. The school's expectations of pupils' written presentation are too low.

### **Curriculum and other activities**

#### **Grade: 3**

The curriculum is satisfactory. It meets statutory requirements and the needs of different groups of pupils. There is a focus on English, mathematics and science, with satisfactory opportunities for pupils to develop skills in information and communication technology. Some work in other subjects is linked in themes, but the school has not yet reviewed its curriculum thoroughly in the light of new national guidance. However, the enrichment activities through sport, visits and visitors to the school are interesting and often exciting. The school's good focus on healthy living and enjoyment in learning shines through here. Links with other local schools and businesses, such as an organic farm, add a great deal to pupils' learning.

### **Care, guidance and support**

#### **Grade: 3**

Care, guidance and support are satisfactory. Care is good, and pupils are safe and well looked after by the staff. Occasionally, older pupils feel that their concerns are not listened to at lunchtime. Arrangements for child protection and health and safety are in place. Guidance and support for learning are satisfactory for the majority of pupils. They are effective in helping pupils from the Traveller community settle when they return to school, and to make good progress in their learning. They are also effective for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. For example, the school took immediate and very effective action to meet the needs of pupils with hearing impairment. The use of assessment to plan new work for pupils is satisfactory, but is

not precise enough to provide challenge for all, especially for some higher attaining pupils and some pupils in Years 3 and 4.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 3**

Leadership and management are satisfactory. Governance is satisfactory, and governors have recently formed a number of working parties to help them fulfil their duties more effectively. A significant budget deficit has constrained spending recently, but a two-year plan has been agreed to erase the deficit. Governors are aware that some aspects of the school have declined since its last inspection. The new headteacher provides good leadership; she has high expectations and is not satisfied with pupils' current satisfactory achievement or the overall quality of provision. She has the support of the staff, particularly the experienced deputy headteacher, the governors and parents in her determination to bring about improvements. The newly agreed school improvement plan is based on accurate evaluation of the school's work. The headteacher's strategy for managing the budget deficit has proved effective in the last year and the deficit is already significantly reduced. Although the improvement plan is at an early stage of implementation, it is already having a positive impact on standards. The school's capacity to improve is good.





## Inspection judgements

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

<b>How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?</b>	3
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
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	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

### Achievement and standards

<b>How well do learners achieve?</b>	3
The standards <sup>1</sup> 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

<b>How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The behaviour of learners	2
The attendance of learners	3
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

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

<sup>1</sup> 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

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	3
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	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**

Houghton C of E School

Jackson Road

Houghton

Carlisle

Cumbria

CA3 0PA

8 February 2007

Dear Children,

It was good to meet you in your lovely school. I want to thank you for your welcome, and for talking to me about how you get on there. I thought I might meet a Roman soldier, but I'll have to be satisfied with this picture.

You will remember that I came to check how well your school looks after you and helps you to learn. I was impressed by the Reception's exciting outdoor play area – I wanted to be five years old so that I could play there! I also thought how brave you all were to play rugby in the frosty weather – you seemed to enjoy it, though. I also enjoyed meeting those of you from the Traveller community.

I think that yours is a satisfactory school that is improving. The staff care for you well, and you are safe and learn to be healthy. I know that there are sometimes difficulties between older pupils, but the staff are there to help you sort these problems out if you tell them. Most of you make the progress expected of you in your learning, and I know that almost all of you enjoy school, and try hard in your work.

Your headteacher and staff have plans to help you reach higher levels in your work, and I think that they are right. Some of you could do better in English and mathematics, and in your handwriting. The staff also plan to try new and more interesting lessons with you to help you learn more successfully. I think that this will also be good for you. Mind you, you already have a wide range of interesting clubs, sports and activities as it is.

I think that you could help the staff, as the school council plans to do, by doing your best in all you do, and continuing to work hard and enjoy yourselves at Houghton school.

Thank you again, and best wishes in your future lives.

Yours sincerely,

Eric Jackson, Lead Inspector