



Rockcliffe CofE School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 112258
Local Authority Cumbria
Inspection number 289223
Inspection dates 12–13 December 2006
Reporting inspector Geoffrey Cooper

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Rockcliffe
School category	Voluntary controlled		Carlisle, Cumbria
Age range of pupils	4–11		CA6 4AA
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01228 674631
Number on roll (school)	92	Fax number	01228 674631
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Mr Ian Park
		Headteacher	Mrs Mary Alston (Acting)
Date of previous school inspection	1 February 2001		

Age group 4–11	Inspection dates 12–13 December 2006	Inspection number 289223
--------------------------	--	------------------------------------

© Crown copyright 2006

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

In this small village school, all pupils are taught in mixed age classes. Attainment on entry to school varies from year to year but it is below average overall. Few pupils are entitled to a free school meal. The number of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is above average; the proportion with a statement of special educational needs is about twice the national average. An unusually high proportion of pupils have joined or left the school mid-year recently. Almost all pupils come from a White British background. A very small number of pupils come from a Traveller background. The school has experienced a great deal of staff absence and turnover in recent years. At the time of the inspection, an acting headteacher was in post.

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, confirming the overwhelming view of parents. A few parents have concerns over the rapid changes of staff, although they express confidence in the leadership of the acting headteacher, which is well placed. In a period of uncertainty, the school has been cautious about its own evaluation of effectiveness, which it believed to be satisfactory.

Standards are average. Given children's starting points, good progress is made through the years in the school. The good provision in the Foundation Stage ensures that children make a good start in school. Pupils' achievement is good and enhanced through good attendance and behaviour, and very positive attitudes to learning. The school has rightly identified the need to improve the number of pupils attaining the average Level 4 in mathematics at Key Stage 2 and the higher Level 3 in science at Key Stage 1. These are issues highlighted in the results of national tests. Recent results have been affected by the late admission of pupils who had not previously performed well. In Key Stage 1, boys do not attain as well as girls although the differential has been eliminated by age 11. Information and communication technology (ICT) is frequently seen in lessons, successfully addressing an issue of the previous inspection.

Enjoyment of school is clear in everything pupils do. The literacy, numeracy and computer skills pupils acquire, and their positive attitudes to learning, equip them well for the future. They know how to look after themselves and understand about staying safe and being healthy. Pupils, especially older ones, are eager to take responsibility, making a good contribution to the school and wider community.

The successful outcomes for pupils are a measure of the professionalism and commitment of staff through an unsettled period. The quality of teaching is good and this stems from effective planning, good teamwork, well established relationships and the good use of subject knowledge. A lively curriculum encourages the development of skills. Pupils benefit a great deal from its breadth and richness. Staff know pupils very well and respond well to their needs. Personal and social needs are well catered for. The tracking of academic progress successfully identifies challenging targets for pupils. Those set for Year 6 last year have been achieved.

Leadership and management are good; the acting headteacher has marshalled effectively the strengths of the staff and the contribution of the governors. Good strategies for self evaluation have been established. The school recognises what it does well and what needs to improve. A robust management plan has been drawn up. The school works purposefully to achieve its objectives. It works well with outside agencies to support pupils' achievement. This is especially so for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

Since the previous inspection good improvements have been made. Pupils in the Foundation Stage have better access to the outdoor curriculum and this gives effective support for their learning. Governors are much more engaged in the strategic management of the school. Pupils' skills in ICT are better. With this good record of success, the school has good capacity to improve further. Value for money is good.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards in mathematics.
- Ensure that boys perform as well as girls in Key Stage 1.
- Raise the standards of the more able pupils in science at Key Stage 1.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

By the end of Year 6, standards of attainment are broadly average in English and science. In mathematics, standards are below average. This reflects the recent national test results and is confirmed in the pupils' current work. Given their starting points, pupils make good progress.

Attainment on entry to school is variable but generally below average. Most children in the Foundation Stage make good progress. They are on track to achieve the goals expected for their age, although some find cooperative skills difficult to acquire. National test results show that Key Stage 1 pupils have made satisfactory progress and current standards are average. Few pupils attain the higher level in science and girls do better than boys.

Key Stage 2 pupils make good progress, with a marked acceleration in learning towards the end of the key stage. The 2005 group progressed from below average at Year 2 to average at Year 6. Differences in the attainment of boys and girls have been eradicated by the end of Key Stage 2. There is a good increase in the numbers attaining the higher national test levels. Staff are currently working on bringing writing up to the good standard seen in reading and some initial successes are evident. Pupils' achievement is not limited to the basic skills of learning; for example, their facility in spoken German is very good for their age.

Pupils, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and the Traveller children, make good progress. The progress of pupils with specific physical difficulties is managed very well by highly supportive adults. Pupils who join the school mid-year settle well and make good progress overall. However, some of these pupils arrive with few basic skills and, with little time to catch up, this has a negative effect on school test results.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Personal development, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is good. Attendance is consistently above average, a measure of pupils' enjoyment of lessons and commitment to school. The good quality of their learning is supported well by good behaviour and positive attitudes. Pupils understand that their school wants them to be safe and healthy and readily accept the messages promoted. They develop and respect rules that help them to contribute to the school community. The work of the school council members makes a good contribution to pupils' sense of

well-being. Pupils are acquiring, in good measure, the personal, social and learning skills that will equip them for the future. As one boy said, 'School helps us to feel comfortable in our learning'.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching is good; it gives effective support to the development of pupils' learning skills. Lessons are typically well planned, catering well for the different ages and the different needs of pupils in the same class. Good use is made of skilled additional adult support. Relationships are firm but warm, often with a sprinkle of well placed good humour. This gives pupils confidence in their learning. They respond well to teachers' challenge and high expectations.

Teachers encourage pupils to develop a range of strategies to complete their tasks. Pupils new to the school mid-year are helped to settle quickly. Careful assessment informs planning that is well targeted at closing any gaps in their previous learning. Occasionally, lessons are not as quickly paced as they might be which sometimes leads to a lack of pupil focus.

Good strategies for marking are in place, especially for older pupils who have opportunities for self assessment. The teacher poses further challenges to which pupils respond, opening a dialogue for further improvement. Marking is also effective where highlighting shows pupils where they have successfully achieved their objectives and where more improvement is needed.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is good. It meets national requirements, promoting pupils' skills in literacy, numeracy and ICT effectively. It ensures that pupils have good opportunities to consolidate their skills. The good quality of German lessons was recognised recently when the school was awarded a prize for the teaching of a modern foreign language. Good planning ensures that the needs of pupils, including those who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities and who come from different backgrounds, are met. The school recognises its development areas; to inject further challenge into mathematics and Key Stage 1 science and to ensure that boys perform as well as girls do. The curriculum is enriched with a broad range of educational visits that enhance achievement, and interesting visitors to school who motivate and stimulate learning. Good provision is made for pupils' personal and social development, resulting in positive attitudes to learning.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The care, guidance and support of pupils are good. Good procedures ensure pupils' safety, progress and well-being. The safeguarding of pupils meets requirements and child protection training is continually refreshed. Staff know pupils very well. This places them in a strong position to support personal and social development. Parents commend the care their children receive. As one wrote, 'My daughter's time at this school has given her the best possible start in life.' Rigorous strategies maintain an overview of progress. The target setting system is very effective in identifying whole school priorities and highlighting individual lack of progress or the need for extra challenge. The full impact of this has yet to be felt in some aspects of attainment, for example in mathematics.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The school is led and managed well. Governors are actively engaged in development planning and strategic management. The acting headteacher has worked swiftly with skilled staff to put in place effective strategies for overseeing performance management, giving structure to future development and ensuring that the school runs smoothly in pupils' best interests. Although there are issues for the school to address in the performance of boys and the more able pupils at Key Stage 1, it strives hard to ensure equality of opportunity for all pupils. Those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities have full access to all that the school offers.

The school has good systems in place to evaluate its effectiveness. School self evaluation is accurate and forms the basis for the school's good capacity to improve further. The school gives good value for money.

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.

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	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?	2
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	2
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?	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	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	2

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?	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?	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	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2
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

Rockcliffe CofE School

Rockcliffe

Carlisle

Cumbria

CA6 4AA

12 December 2006

Dear Children

I really enjoyed meeting you, talking to you and watching you in lessons. Thank you for the warm welcome shown to me.

You really work hard. Your behaviour and attitudes to learning are good. Some of the success of your school is because your attendance is good. It is obvious that most children make good progress in your school and enjoy their work. A lot of the credit for this must go to the adults who work with you. Lessons are good and you have interesting activities to complete. Even if I had not seen this for myself, you told me that this was the case. Your school works really hard to make sure that you are secure and confident as learners. You know that a great deal is done to keep you safe and healthy. Your school is good at providing opportunities for you to grow and develop as individuals. The school council was quick to tell me how much you help each other, especially new children joining your school.

Most of you make good progress. This is clear from the work in your books, in test results and in the lessons I saw. There are some things that can get better which your school already knows about. Your work in mathematics is not as good as English and science. In the infants, boys do not do as well as the girls and the faster learners do not do as well in science as in the other subjects. Your school has plans to improve all these things. You can help by making sure that you take all the opportunities you get to work quickly and accurately in mathematics lessons. These lessons already challenge you to think and find different ways to solve problems. Writing shows you have good ideas. Try to become more exact with spelling and punctuation. And boys! Don't let the girls outpace you. Usually you have made up the difference by the time you are ready to leave Year 6.

You enjoyed the occasion of your Christmas dinner very much. I hope that your Christmas holidays were as enjoyable. Once again, thank you very much for the welcome and friendship you showed me.

Yours sincerely

Geoff Cooper

Lead Inspector