

Coniston CofE Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	112279
Local Authority	Cumbria
Inspection number	289233
Inspection dates	3–4 July 2007
Reporting inspector	Stafford Evans

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	69
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Rev Mark East
Headteacher	Mr Steven Jackson
Date of previous school inspection	1 March 2003
School address	Shepherd's Bridge Coniston Cumbria LA21 8AL
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Age group	3–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

Coniston is a much smaller than average size primary school in an attractive rural setting on the edge of the village. The socio-economic context for the school is mixed. The proportion of pupils entitled to a free school meal is below average, as is the proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Pupils are predominately White British. Children's skills on entry to school are broadly average.

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 that is improving and gives good value for money. The challenge for the school is to sustain the well above average standards and good achievement of the current Year 6 pupils. The school has outstanding features. Pupils make outstanding progress in Key Stage 1. Throughout the school, pupils identified as having learning difficulties and/or disabilities make excellent progress. Pupils benefit from very effective liaison with local schools, including the local secondary school, local authority support agencies, parents and the community.

Pupils' personal development is good. They like school and behave well. Their attitudes to school and relationships with one another are good. This positively affects the pupils' good quality of learning. Throughout the school, pupils are well motivated and interested in all that is going on and really enjoy their learning. This is helped by the good curriculum that provides pupils with many first-hand learning experiences. Within the curriculum, there is good provision to help with pupils' personal development. As a result, pupils have a good understanding of the importance of a healthy lifestyle and how to stay safe. Teachers extend pupils' learning very effectively with outdoor studies, a wide range of visits and the excellent use of specialist staff. A very good range of extra-curricular activities plays an important part in helping pupils retain a desire to learn beyond the classroom.

Children in the Foundation Stage make good progress and attain standards that are at least at a level that is expected for children this age. Teaching in the Foundation Stage is good. Staff work very effectively together, have high expectations of what children can achieve and provide a good indoor curriculum, which is better than the outdoor one. There are very well planned improvements to outdoor provision due to take place this summer that will help to improve the quality of the outdoor curriculum.

Pupils make excellent progress in Key Stage 1 because of the outstanding teaching. They attain standards that are well above the national average. Teaching and learning in Key Stage 2 are good and pupils generally make good progress. However, this progress is uneven because, in some lessons, the pace at which pupils learn is too slow and expectations of what they can achieve are not always high enough.

Equality of opportunity is evident throughout the school. This is exemplified by the excellent progress made by pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. One of the main reasons is the excellent support that they receive in class. More able pupils achieve well because teachers make good use of the results of assessment to match work accurately to pupils' varying needs. Pupils' very good level of basic skills and good personal development ensure that they are exceptionally well prepared for the next stage of their education and for later life.

Parents are overwhelmingly supportive of the school. They recognise the good care that the school provides for their children. They are clear of the role they can play in helping their children learn through their very good links with the school. The school is an integral part of the local community. As a result, pupils make an excellent contribution to community life. This is fostered through the school's successful drive to keep its community involvement at the forefront of school life.

Leadership and management are good. There is a very good sense of team spirit among staff and governors, with a definite shared commitment to succeed. The headteacher, very ably supported by subject leaders, leads the school very well. The governing body fulfils its responsibilities well and takes an active role in helping to shape strategic planning. School

self-evaluation is very accurate and based on effective monitoring and evaluation of performance. The school has good capacity to sustain its good improvements since the last inspection.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that learning is consistently brisk in lessons and expectations consistently high in order to sustain the rise in standards at Key Stage 2.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Achievement is good and standards are well above average but have not been consistently so over recent years. This year, the school has met very challenging targets. Children start school with skills which are broadly average for their age. They make good progress in the Foundation Stage and children attain at least nationally expected standards by the time they enter Year 1, and many attain above those expected standards.

By the end of Year 2, standards are well above average and have been this way for the last few years. Pupils make excellent progress in lessons in Years 1 and 2 and achieve outstandingly. The high standards have been maintained because of the excellent teaching and learning in Years 1 and 2.

By the end of Key Stage 2, standards in the last three years have been variable, but above average overall. Pupils achieved satisfactorily given their starting points in Year 3. Current standards are much higher than in recent years and are well above average. Pupils generally make good progress in lessons, but this progress is uneven. This is because the pace of learning is not always brisk enough and expectations are not consistently high enough. Standards in science are well above average and have been consistently so for several years.

Pupils identified as having learning difficulties and/or disabilities make excellent progress. They receive support from very skilled staff. The very effective implementation of well-devised individual education plans means that, not only do they achieve outstandingly, but many also attain as highly as their classmates. Although there are some differences in the attainment of boys and girls, the difference is not significant. There is no discernible pattern over time.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' personal development and well-being are good, as is their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Pupils enjoy school a great deal and their behaviour is good. They have positive attitudes to learning. In lessons, pupils listen carefully and usually concentrate for long periods. They generally show courtesy to each other, to teachers and to visitors who are greeted in an open, friendly and happy manner. Pupils report that they feel safe and any incident of inappropriate behaviour is dealt with effectively by the staff. There have been no exclusions in recent years and no incidents of bullying or aggressive behaviour were seen during the inspection.

Pupils have a very well developed knowledge of how to keep healthy. This is put into practice through a very high take-up of the healthy meals served at lunchtime and through participation in the many sporting activities that the school provides. Community involvement is a very strong feature of the school. Pupils make an excellent contribution to community life. They have a

very good level of basic skills and an ability to work cooperatively and collaboratively. Thus, they have an excellent grounding for their next phase of education and for their later working roles. Pupils' attendance is satisfactory. The attendance rate is adversely affected by the high proportion of families who take holidays during term time.

Pupils have a very good understanding of their own cultural heritage and a satisfactory but developing one of the cultural diversity of the wider world. For example, there are recently established links with children in Ghana and South Africa.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are good. Typically, the lessons adequately show what is to be taught and learned. Teachers give pupils good opportunities to develop literacy and numeracy skills in other subjects, such as, in history and geography. There is effective use of pupil assessment to ensure that activities are matched to pupils' varying needs and prior attainment. For example, more able pupils are sufficiently challenged and, as a result, achieve well. Pupils' learning is positively affected because teachers use a range of teaching methods. These include whole class teaching, and group and individual work, involving practical, investigative and problem solving activities. Pupils' behaviour is managed effectively; therefore, no time is wasted and pupils do a lot of work.

In the Foundation Stage, teaching and learning are good. Staff ensure that children receive a wide range of well-planned structured activities. The children's attainment is monitored well through systematic assessment from entry to the nursery, with observations on a daily basis. Teaching and learning in Key Stage 1 are outstanding. Teaching is based on very high expectations, brisk pace and the teacher's infectious enthusiasm. In Key Stage 2, teaching and learning are good but uneven. The many strengths that are typical of the teaching in the school are present but the expectations of what pupils should achieve are not always high enough. This is illustrated in the marking of some work: though providing some pointers for improvement, it does not challenge pupils to do even better. Also, the pace at which pupils work is not always brisk enough; this slows the progress they make in some lessons.

The teaching of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities generally takes place within their classroom and is excellent. Work is very closely matched to their specific needs and their behaviour is managed exceptionally well. Extremely skilled teaching assistants play a pivotal role in their learning.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum provides a wide range of learning opportunities that are very relevant to the needs of pupils. As a result, curriculum provision is good, pupils really enjoy their learning and their achievement is at least good. Pupils spoke about their particular enjoyment of design and technology and art and design. The strength of the provision in these subjects and the good achievement are reflected in the recent Artsmark Gold award.

There is very good use of the locality to give pupils first-hand learning experiences. For example, pupils' geographical skills were well developed by a field trip to a local river. Not only was the work of high quality but it also fired pupils' enthusiasm for the subject. There is good planning

for the use and development of pupils' literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT) skills across the curriculum. Pupils' learning is exceptionally well enhanced by a very wide choice of extra-curricular activities; these include sports, cookery and wildlife. They enjoy a variety of educational visits, including a residential visit for Years 5 and 6.

The curriculum provides good opportunities for pupils' personal development. Through a good programme of personal, social and health education, pupils learn about important facets of how to stay safe and healthy. Specialist staff make a very significant contribution to ensuring that pupils receive a broad and quality curriculum. For example, pupils' learning benefits from visiting specialists in music, sports and ICT. The curriculum is further enriched by weekly French lessons.

The Foundation Stage curriculum is good and has improved since the time of the last inspection. Foundation Stage provision will be re-organised in September 2007, including improved outdoor learning accommodation and facilities. The school is mindful of the need to ensure that the curriculum for indoor and outdoor activities is carefully linked so as to give children continuity in their learning.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Care, guidance and support are good. The school takes very good care of pupils. Safeguarding requirements are in place; the school reports that risk assessments and health and safety requirements are also in place. The school is currently deliberating how best to deal with a concern about access to a particular part of the school grounds. The school is firmly committed to encouraging pupils' enjoyment and achievement. This helps pupils to attain challenging targets.

Teachers track pupils' progress effectively. In this way, pupils who need extra support are quickly identified. The support provided for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is excellent. This ensures that they are fully included in all aspects of school life, enjoy their learning and achieve excellently. Day-to-day guidance in the form of the marking of pupils' work is less effective. The school works well with parents and has very effective links with outside agencies that provide specialist training and advice; for example, in relation to provision for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, links with the National Trust and participation in the sports partnership.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good. The school is very well led by the headteacher. He is very ably supported by the governors and senior teachers to provide very clear educational direction and strong, influential and supportive leadership. This has led to good improvements since the last inspection. For example, Foundation Stage provision is better and the progress children make is faster. Also, the recent dip in writing standards has been tackled successfully. The literacy subject coordinator has played an excellent part in helping to raise standards.

The school practises equality of opportunity. This is reflected in the good achievement of more able pupils and particularly in the excellent achievement of pupils identified as having learning

difficulties and/or disabilities. The very good work of the special educational needs coordinator, very ably supported by the learning support staff, is central to this excellent provision.

School improvement planning is good. Developments are given appropriate priority. Improvement planning is based securely on accurate self-evaluation. Monitoring procedures are generally good and provide information about where improvements are needed.

Governance is good. Governors demonstrate a good understanding of their roles and work skilfully to support the school with advice and support. They have a good level of involvement in strategic planning, decision making, and in reviewing and monitoring school developments. They are successful in engaging parents and the community in helping with pupils' learning and in ensuring that the school remains an integral part of the village community; a stated aim of the school.

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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?	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	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	2
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	1

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	3
How well learners enjoy their education	1
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	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?	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.

Annex A

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	1
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	1
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

5 July 2007

Dear Children

Inspection of Coniston C of E Primary School, Cumbria, LA21 8AL

Thank you for the warm and friendly welcome that you gave me when I visited your school. I appreciate the time you gave up to talk to me about your school. As many of you and your parents said, 'It is a good school'. There are also some especially good things about your school. All of you make at least good progress and some of you make excellent progress because of the good teaching and learning. Throughout the school, those of you who find learning and concentrating that bit harder than other children make particularly good progress. This is because you have worked very hard to make the best use of the outstanding help that you receive. All of you behave well and really enjoy your learning because of all the very interesting work, in school and further afield, planned by the teachers.

The school is very well led by your headteacher and ensures that you are well cared for. He is helped a lot by all the adults working in the school and by the school governors. All their good work has meant that the standards you reach by the end of Year 6 are much higher than those found in most primary schools. I have challenged the school to see if these standards can be repeated in years to come. To help this happen, I have asked that in all lessons you work quickly so that you do a lot of work and that teachers always expect you to do as well as you possibly can.

It is important that you play your part in helping to reach high standards. Try to always work quickly but accurately. Also, speak with your teacher if you feel that the work is not hard enough. In other words, act out your school motto that includes the phrase 'aim high'.

I wish you every success in the future and please continue to work with everyone else in the school to keep the school at the heart of the Coniston village community. Your involvement in community life is a very important part of your education and you certainly do really well in showing that it is.

Yours sincerely

Stafford Evans

Lead inspector