



# Bowness-on-Solway Primary School

## Inspection Report

**Unique Reference Number** 112414  
**Local Authority** Cumbria  
**Inspection number** 289280  
**Inspection dates** 2–3 November 2006  
**Reporting inspector** Jennie Platt

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>	Bowness-on-Solway
<b>School category</b>	Foundation		Wigton, Cumbria
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–11		CA7 5AF
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed	<b>Telephone number</b>	01697 351384
<b>Number on roll (school)</b>	76	<b>Fax number</b>	01697 351384
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body	<b>Chair</b>	Mrs Catherine Bartlett
		<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr Chris Rafferty
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	1 March 2002		

<b>Age group</b> 4–11	<b>Inspection dates</b> 2–3 November 2006	<b>Inspection number</b> 289280
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## **Introduction**

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

## **Description of the school**

This is a small school where pupils are taught in three mixed age classes. It is situated in a rather isolated spot and draws pupils from a wide community. More pupils move into or out of the school during the school year than is usual. The number of pupils eligible for a free school meal is below average. A very small number of pupils are from minority ethnic groups and none speaks English as an additional language. The number of pupils identified as having learning difficulties and/or disabilities is above 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. It is held in high esteem in the locality and parents are very pleased with the education that their children receive. As one parent wrote, 'The school is very keen to involve all pupils in activities and this is an important part of their education, helping them to develop socially'. Many physical activities are provided and pupils are very keen to keep fit and healthy. They join in energetically with the lunchtime huff and puff sessions. Pupils enjoy school and eagerly participate in all that is on offer. The very good school performances are a highlight of the year for pupils and contribute to the strong sense of community, which is very evident in the school. Pupils relate very well to each other, are considerate, behave well and work hard. Their personal development is good and, by Year 6, pupils leave school as mature individuals well prepared for the future, both academically and socially.

Results of national tests fluctuate because of the small size of the year groups and the number of pupils starting at different times in the school year. However, it is very evident that over the last four years standards for 11-year-olds have risen and overall achievement is good. Progress in the Foundation Stage is satisfactory. From an average starting point, children make satisfactory progress to reach the expected goals by the end of the Reception class. Progress is good in mathematics in Key Stage 1 and the results of national tests for seven-year-olds are above average. In reading and writing, progress is satisfactory and most reach the expected level. However, more able pupils are not reaching above average levels and could achieve more. This is not the case in Key Stage 2, especially in Years 5 and 6 where teaching is very challenging and a high proportion of pupils reach above average standards in English, mathematics and science. The most recent results show that this improving trend is continuing.

The good quality of teaching accounts for pupils' good achievement. Strengths are in the variety of activities that make lessons fun and motivate pupils. Lessons are managed effectively and run smoothly. Pace and expectations are strong for the older pupils but in other year groups teachers do not always match work to pupils' ability and some could achieve more. Standards in mathematics are good because teachers share with pupils their enthusiasm for the subject. Assessment procedures in information and communication technology (ICT) are underdeveloped, which means teachers are not able to check that pupils are making enough progress. Although resources have improved, more computers are needed in classes to enable teachers to use ICT in all subjects.

The curriculum is satisfactory. It is enriched by a good variety of clubs, visits and visitors. Children in the Foundation Stage do not always have enough opportunities to be independent and to learn through creative activities and play. The care and welfare of the pupils are given high priority and pupils say they feel safe and secure because they know staff are available to help.

The school's success in raising standards since the last inspection is due to good leadership and management. The school is reaping the benefits of many wise changes implemented by the headteacher and now provides good value for money. The

headteacher's strong leadership has been a key factor in sustaining a focus on raising standards. Staff and governors regularly evaluate what is happening in school and have an accurate picture of what is working well and what needs attention. All involved with the school work very well together and the school has good capacity to improve.

### **What the school should do to improve further**

- Improve the progress more able pupils make in reading and writing in Key Stage 1.
- Improve the curriculum in the Foundation Stage so that children have more scope to learn through investigation and creative play.
- Put assessment systems in place in ICT to measure learning effectively and improve resources in class to enable pupils to use ICT in all subjects.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 2**

The achievement of pupils is good. Children's attainment on entry to the school varies but is broadly typical for their age. In the Foundation Stage, children make satisfactory progress and the great majority reach the learning goals expected of children at the end of the Reception year. Good progress is made in personal development because children benefit from being mixed with older children and quickly learn to interact and make friends.

Overall progress is satisfactory in Key Stage 1. It is good in mathematics because of the focus on practical activities. Results of national tests for seven-year-olds show standards are usually above average because a good number of pupils reach above average standards. This is not the case in reading and writing. Although the progress of the majority is satisfactory and standards are average in national tests, the more able pupils do not achieve as well as they should. Inspection findings show a similar picture at present in all subjects.

Pupils make good progress in Key Stage 2. National test results in 2005 show standards were above average in mathematics and science with a high proportion of pupils reaching above average levels. This was not the case in English and the school focussed on challenging the more able pupils in Year 6. These efforts have been rewarded and the school's data point to a rise in standards in 2006 with a greatly increased number of pupils exceeding the level expected for their age. For many of these pupils, these results represent very good progress and they have successfully overcome underachievement in Key Stage 1 when the school was experiencing some difficulties.

Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those from minority ethnic groups make good progress. Although many classes have more boys than girls, there is no evidence that girls do not do as well as the boys. The school caters well for the academically gifted pupils. Links with the local secondary school enable these pupils, especially older ones, to move on to harder work and they make good progress.

## Personal development and well-being

### Grade: 2

Good personal development makes a strong contribution to the pupils' achievement. Pupils greatly enjoy school and respond positively to the many opportunities available. One pupil had great difficulty explaining what he liked best in the school because he enjoyed everything. Pupils have a good understanding about keeping safe and healthy. As well as being involved in many physical activities, pupils take heed of the important messages about keeping safe and healthy eating. The school uses drama and songs to teach pupils about the dangers of drugs and, consequently, pupils really remember these important messages. This innovative approach is shared as an example of good practice for other schools.

Attendance is above average. There have been no exclusions and this is a harmonious school where pupils are polite and well mannered. Most behave well, although a few younger pupils become restless when tasks do not sustain their attention. Many older pupils show a great sense of maturity for their age because they have been given opportunities to help younger pupils. They have a good understanding about their responsibilities within the school community and beyond. They know their actions can affect others and are eager to be involved in fund-raising because they appreciate their actions can bring about an improvement. Members of the school council learn to represent others and know they have influence because their decisions are often put into practice in the school. For example, they were instrumental in gaining fruit for the older pupils as part of their review on being healthy. This social awareness and good academic skills prepare them well for the future.

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Links through raising funds for a medical centre in Nepal provide an understanding of other lifestyles. Visitors also increase this knowledge of other cultures but more could be done to develop a full appreciation of life in a multi-cultural society.

## Quality of provision

### Teaching and learning

#### Grade: 2

The overall quality of teaching and learning is good but varies between key stages. The best teaching is in Key Stage 2, especially in Years 5 and 6, and this is the major reason for progress accelerating as pupils move through the school. In these lessons, the teachers' high expectations and enthusiasm for teaching shine through and inspire the pupils to improve and work hard.

In Key Stage 1, the variety of activities makes learning fun, but tasks are not sufficiently challenging in reading and writing for the more able pupils. For example, in writing sessions, too much time is allocated to drawing a picture rather than writing at length and in detail. In the Foundation Stage, teaching and learning are satisfactory. Warm

relationships mean children settle well and enjoy school but the approach is often too formal and not enough time is given to learning through play and investigation.

Throughout the school, numeracy is taught well with brisk mental calculation activities ensuring that pupils are alert and tuned in to number activities. After spotting a weakness in pupils' ability to solve problems, the school has adopted a consistent approach to this activity and this is now working most successfully. Teachers manage pupils effectively so that lessons run smoothly. Staff are starting to make good use of the interactive whiteboard, especially to show video excerpts that set the scene well, for example, in history and literacy lessons.

## **Curriculum and other activities**

### **Grade: 3**

The curriculum is satisfactory with several good features. It includes good attention to pupils' personal and social development. Some imaginative approaches convey very important messages about personal safety in a way that pupils recall and will find useful in their later lives. Enrichment is very good both in visits and visitors. Professional sports coaches and musicians extend pupils' skills and are especially beneficial for the pupils who are talented in music and sport. Themed weeks and the focus on performing arts make this a busy and exciting school.

The curriculum is carefully planned for the mixed age classes so that pupils do not miss or repeat any topics. Literacy and numeracy are used well in other subjects. Teachers do not promote ICT well enough because there are not enough resources. The merger of the Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1 is very recent and, as yet, the curriculum for the youngest children is not fully meeting their needs. The outdoor space is very attractive but difficult to access without adult support. The small classroom makes it difficult to plan for all areas of learning and for the continuous provision of activities, such as sand and water play, that young children need and enjoy.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 2**

This is a caring school and staff know the pupils very well. Pupils say they feel safe because they can approach staff with any concerns, confident that the response will solve their worries. This improves their rate of learning as they settle well and are able to focus on their studies. Safeguarding arrangements are in place. Child protection procedures are understood by all. Close partnerships with other agencies enable staff to provide good support and advice to pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities so that these pupils relate well to others and play a full part in school life.

Assessment is satisfactory and improving rapidly with the new tracking system now in place. It is now possible for staff to follow pupils' progress from year to year and spot any pupils not making the expected progress. In the Year 5/6 class, this system is used exceptionally well to set targets, monitor progress regularly and adjust planning so that the needs of pupils are met well. This good practice is starting to be seen in other classes. Staff are using this system to involve pupils more in their own working

by setting them personal goals. This information is not yet shared with parents and some expressed a wish for more information about their children's progress. Assessment of progress in ICT is not sufficiently well established to check on progress and to identify aspects of the subject that need attention.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 2**

The headteacher has been instrumental in bringing about change, which has successfully raised standards in the school. New approaches to teaching science and to tracking pupils' progress are just two examples of change that have resolved prior weaknesses. A collaborative approach to self-evaluation, including governors and parents, means the school has an accurate picture of its strengths and the next issues to be tackled. As a result, improvement since the last inspection is good and the school has good capacity to improve.

Monitoring of teaching is rigorous. Consequently, the school is already being advised by the local authority on how to improve the Foundation Stage curriculum. Priorities are set out clearly in the school's improvement plan but targets are not always linked to raising standards and it is unclear how success will be measured. In practice, subject leaders are much clearer about actions that are raising standards. This is very evident in numeracy, as seen in the successful lessons on problem-solving where pupils showed great confidence in working out their answers. Equality of opportunity is good for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, but the needs of higher attaining pupils are not fully met.

Governance is good. Governors are linked both to a class and a subject and this enables them to have first-hand knowledge of what is happening in school. The self-evaluation sub-committee has been in place for a long time and governors are skilled at seeking out extra advice so that their judgements are based on firm evidence. Governors are very aware of the difficulties of falling rolls and make good use of external advice when making major spending decisions.



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## 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>	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	3
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

<b>How well do learners achieve?</b>	2
The standards <sup>1</sup> 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	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	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

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?</b>	2
<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>	2

<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>	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**

Bowness-on-Solway Primary School

Bowness-on-Solway

Wigton

Cumbria

CA7 5AF

3 November 2006

Dear Pupils

Thank you for the friendly welcome you gave me when I visited your school. I enjoyed the way you chatted to me and your comments have helped me to write this report.

You and your parents are correct in your opinion that yours is a good school. You play a vital part in this by your hard work and good behaviour. I agree that you have many exciting activities, including the very popular school plays, and it is good to see the way you join in so enthusiastically with all that is on offer. Teaching is good and, by the time you leave school, you achieve well with standards being better than those usually seen. It is good to see how you listen to messages about keeping safe and healthy. I hope you enjoyed Bonfire Night and remembered what teachers told you about acting sensibly.

In the report, I have pointed out some ways to make your school even better. The children in the Reception class are happy in school and teachers are looking at ways to make their learning fun. Teachers are also looking to see that some pupils in Years 1 and 2 make as much progress as they can in their reading and writing. I know how much you enjoy using computers and more resources are to be obtained so that you can increase your skills.

You are lucky to learn in such a beautiful part of the country and I loved the view from the library. I know you will all have many wonderful memories of the time you spent at your school and I wish you well for the future.

Best wishes

Mrs J E Platt

Additional Inspector