



Hallbankgate Village School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 112417
Local Authority Cumbria
Inspection number 289281
Inspection dates 12–13 September 2006
Reporting inspector David Earley

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Hallbankgate
School category	Foundation		Brampton, Cumbria
Age range of pupils	3–11		CA8 2NJ
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01697 746237
Number on roll (school)	53	Fax number	01697 746237
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Mrs Sophie Bell
		Headteacher	Mrs Deborah Seward
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected		

Age group	Inspection dates	Inspection number
3–11	12–13 September 2006	289281

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

This is a much smaller than average school which draws its pupils from a wide rural area on the outskirts of Carlisle. No pupil speaks English as a second language and all are from White British backgrounds. Eligibility for free school meals is low and the proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is much lower than average. Pupils are taught in three mixed-age classes.

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 gives good value for money. Standards have improved in the Foundation Stage and Key Stage 2 in the last two years due to strong leadership and significant improvements in provision. These have been effective because staffing is more stable and staff have a clear understanding of their responsibilities and the school's short and long-term aims. Currently, pupils achieve well in the Foundation Stage and Key Stage 2, and attain above average standards. Progress is slower, although satisfactory overall, in Key Stage 1 where standards are average in reading and mathematics but below average in writing. The reason for this, identified by the school in its self-evaluation, is that the school gave priority to the youngest and oldest children when setting out to improve standards two years ago. The strategies implemented have been successful and are progressively leading to improvements in standards in Key Stage 1.

Pupils enjoy coming to school. At the beginning of the school day, they come willingly into the playground, take part enthusiastically in their warm-up exercises and go eagerly to their classrooms. This is because relationships are very good and good teaching provides interesting work for children of all abilities. Good personal development ensures that they behave well and receive a good grounding in skills which will prepare them well for adult life. Pupils contribute well to the local community and school events are important elements in village life. The school provides a strong focus on healthy lifestyles. Well-balanced meals and healthy snacks, together with lots of opportunities to exercise, help pupils to make the right choices. Pupils have a good understanding about their own culture, but there are insufficient opportunities for them to learn about cultural diversity.

Teachers have good subject knowledge and challenge pupils. This leads to good progress overall. The good teaching in Key Stage 1 has helped to make up for previous instabilities in staffing and to identify and address the need to improve standards, particularly in writing, by the end of Year 2. The quality of teaching and the improved curriculum, which links subjects together, provide all pupils with rich and enjoyable experiences. Pupils are well cared for, well supported and feel safe. However, the school does not have an efficient system for tracking academic progress throughout the school as part of its support and guidance.

Leadership and management are good. The clear and purposeful leadership of the headteacher has led to improvements in provision and standards since her appointment. Staff work well as a team, although the role of subject leaders is not fully developed. The governing body is supportive and the many new members are eager to develop their knowledge and skills. The strong leadership of the headteacher and the shared commitment of staff and governors to raising standards give the school good capacity to improve further.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve standards in Key Stage 1, particularly in writing.

- Provide an efficient whole-school tracking system to check progress.
- Increase opportunities for pupils to learn about the multi-cultural nature of society.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Children enter the school with standards that are broadly average. They achieve well in the Foundation Stage, reaching standards higher than might be expected for their age. Standards in reading and mathematics are average in Year 2 and improving, as indicated by results in national tests and evidence seen during the inspection. All pupils achieve satisfactorily in these aspects of their work; achievement in writing is weak as reflected in the below average results in national tests and in standards observed during the inspection. Results in national tests in Year 6 cannot be easily compared because the numbers in the year groups are small. In 2005, performance was similar to the national average in English, mathematics and science. This represented satisfactory achievement from a small year group of pupils, some of whom joined the school at a late stage. Pupils' performance in national tests in 2006 was higher, indicating good achievement in English, mathematics and science. Current standards in Year 6 are above average. In the last two years, strategies to raise standards have concentrated on the Foundation Stage and Key Stage 2 with good effect. Consequently, all pupils in these key stages, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, make good progress. Pupils are not yet making similar levels of progress in Key Stage 1, particularly in writing. This has been clearly identified by the school and is a priority for improvement this year.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Personal development and well-being are good. Relationships are very good and pupils say that they feel safe and secure. The school successfully promotes healthy eating and pupils know about the advantages of a healthy diet. Catering staff proudly maintain that: 'Chips have not been seen for five years.' The school creates a very calm and safe environment and pupils behave well in and around school. That they clearly enjoy coming to school is evidenced by pupils' bright and cheerful faces, their enthusiasm for learning and by their above average attendance. They know about issues related to bullying and racism because they have been consulted about the school's approach. They are generally confident and show high self-esteem. There is a very strong family atmosphere in the school so that pupils of different ages get on well with each other. Pupils accept responsibility for the day-to-day running of the school. They know that hard work and collaboration prepare them well for the future and the world of work. Pupils contribute well to the local and wider communities by involvement in the life of the village and in fundraising for those less fortunate than themselves. Spiritual, moral and social development are good. Pupils have a good understanding of their own culture. However, their understanding of the cultural diversity of the wider community is weak.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are good and occasionally excellent. Staff work well together as a team. They know pupils well and are skilled at planning work which is well suited to very wide ranges of age and ability within their classes. The good teaching in Key Stage 1 is helping to compensate for previous staffing instabilities. It is leading to improved performance in reading and mathematics, although not yet in writing. This has been identified as a priority for improvement. Teachers have good subject knowledge which enables them to give clear explanations and ask challenging questions. Teachers manage pupils well so that they are generally well behaved and sustain their concentration. Lessons are lively and interesting, leading to hard work and enjoyment. Good use is made of information and communication technology (ICT) to extend learning. Because relationships are very good, children are continually encouraged, which helps to foster their self-esteem. Where teaching is excellent, pupils are fully absorbed in their tasks because they are challenged to extend their knowledge and teachers engage them in well-paced and stimulating dialogue. Teaching assistants are well deployed and work closely with class teachers. Work is assessed regularly and is used well to plan for future learning. Teaching in the Foundation Stage is good so children settle quickly into school and achieve well.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is good. It is broad and balanced and well suited to pupils' needs and aptitudes. The newly improved planning is thorough and ensures that there are appropriate links between subjects, thereby helping to bring a relevance to learning. The recently implemented provision for ICT is effectively developing pupils' technical skills and is used well to extend learning in other subjects of the curriculum. The school makes good use of its attractive grounds to integrate learning about the environment in the everyday curriculum. This is further enriched by opportunities for pupils to learn from a wide range of experiences. For example, they learn German and first aid. The school provides many opportunities to extend learning through a very wide range of visits out of school and from visitors to school. These provide good opportunities for pupils to develop social skills and independence as well as making learning in school more meaningful. The school takes advantage of its links with the local schools' consortium to provide a wide range of extra-curricular activities.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Care, guidance and support are satisfactory. Care and guidance for pupils' personal development are good; systems for academic support and guidance are satisfactory. This is a very caring school where children and their families are well known to staff.

It provides a good level of support for all its pupils, including looked-after children and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Procedures for child protection and risk assessment are effectively in place. Parents are confident about approaching the school and are happy with the level of care given to their children. Very good relationships contribute effectively to pupils' well-being and progress. Pupils say that they would be confident to approach adults in school should they have any problems. Systems for tracking progress are not sufficiently efficient or robust throughout the whole school. This impedes the clarity and ready accessibility of information with which to give academic support and guidance.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher has a very clear and purposeful vision for the improvement of the school. Well supported by staff since her appointment, she has progressively brought about well-planned improvements that have resulted in higher achievement in many aspects of pupils' work.

Staff work well as a team to provide and set challenging targets. Subject leaders have a clear understanding of standards in their subjects and are beginning to extend their role in monitoring and evaluation in order to make improvements. School self-evaluation gives a realistic appraisal of where the school is now and priorities for improvement are clearly identified in the School Improvement Plan, leading to improving provision and achievement. The school is well supported by very enthusiastic governors, many of whom are new to the position. They have undertaken a thorough evaluation of their role in school and are participating in training in order to develop their skills. The school is beginning to make good use of their expertise. Most parents have positive views of the school and are provided with many opportunities to support their children's learning. The school works closely with the local schools' consortium in order to share good practice. Resources are managed well. For example, the provision of interactive whiteboards and networked computers is helping to raise standards in ICT. Improved provision in the Foundation Stage is helping to challenge children and extend their independent learning. Strong leadership and committed support from staff and governors have enabled the school to make significant improvements since the last inspection and it has good capacity to improve further.

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Inspection judgements

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

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	2
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	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

To the pupils of:

Hallbankgate Village School

Hallbankgate

Brampton

Cumbria

CA8 2NJ

14 September 2006

Dear Pupils

Thank you very much for making me welcome in your school. You were very quick to tell me that you enjoy coming to school and that you feel safe and well cared for. I was very impressed by the way you get on with each other and how you help out in school in lots of ways. You clearly enjoy the healthy school meals and know about the importance of healthy diets and keeping fit. I enjoyed being in your lessons and could see that you work hard and behave well in class and at break times.

I think that you have a good headteacher and that she has helped to make lots of improvements in the way you learn. All the teachers want you to do well and they work hard to help you. The school makes sure that you get a good start in Nursery and Reception. By the end of Year 6 you make good progress in your mathematics, English and science. Younger children need to do better in their writing by the end of Year 2. I have asked your teachers to give you similar help to that given in Nursery and Reception and in the class for older children.

I was pleased to see that your attendance is good. Also, that you go on lots of visits to interesting places and take part in the many clubs after school. All of these activities help your learning. The adults in school are very caring and helpful and know you and your families very well. You, also, are very kind in the way you give help to charities. I have asked your teachers to make sure that you find out more about how the lives of people in other towns and villages are similar to yours and also different. You tell me that if you have a problem, adults listen to you and try to help. I have talked to your headteacher about improving the way teachers check your progress as you move through the school so that they can help you build on your learning year by year.

Thank you again for your warm welcome.

David Earley

Lead Inspector