



Cottam Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 131720
Local Authority Lancashire
Inspection number 293826
Inspection dates 6–7 March 2007
Reporting inspector Shirley Herring

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Haydocks Lane
School category	Community		Cottam, Preston
Age range of pupils	4–11		Lancashire, PR4 0NY
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01772 727053
Number on roll (school)	262	Fax number	01772 727055
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Dr Jon Wright
		Headteacher	Mrs Lindsay Timms
Date of previous school inspection	1 February 2001		

Age group 4–11	Inspection dates 6–7 March 2007	Inspection number 293826
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors.

Description of the school

Cottam is a larger than average primary school. The large majority of pupils are White British and come from comfortable and supportive homes. Children join the school with attainment above average for their age and the proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities is below average. Very few pupils are at an early stage of learning English. There is more than one age group in most classes. The headteacher has been in post for almost a year, following a period in which there were several changes of leadership. The school is used by the local church for weekly worship and by other community groups. The breakfast club and holiday club on site are managed independently and were subject to a separate inspection.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Cottam Primary is a good school, which cares for its pupils well. One parent, reflecting the views of many, said that the school treats all children as special.

Pupils enjoy coming to school and contribute enthusiastically to lessons. They are keenly aware that a good diet and physical exercise helps them to keep healthy, and activities such as cycling proficiency help them to keep safe. Pupils are prepared well for later life because of the good standards they achieve and the good opportunities they have to cooperate with each other. They make an exceptional contribution to school life as members of the school council. As prefects, through links with a school in Africa and support for local charities, they contribute well to the wider community.

The new headteacher is providing stability after an extended period of change in the leadership of the school. The good relationships among all members of the school community make a strong contribution to pupils' personal development, which is good. A thorough and accurate evaluation of the school's work is used systematically to plan improvements. The teaching of older pupils in groups of similar ability each morning is helping to raise standards. There are new systems in place to monitor pupils' progress, but they are not yet used consistently enough throughout the school to identify any pupils who might be underachieving.

Teaching is generally good; pupils make good overall progress during their time in school and achieve well. Provision in the Foundation Stage is good and children make good progress; nearly all achieve at least the standards expected for their age by the time they join Year 1. Pupils are making good overall progress in Key Stage 1, although the more able pupils do not achieve as well as they should in mathematics because the work is sometimes too easy for them. Pupils make good progress in Key Stage 2. Standards are rising and are well above average. The national test results in 2006 were well above average in English and science, and average in mathematics.

The headteacher is supported well by the acting deputy and senior leadership team and the school is led and managed well. Some subject managers are new in post and they have not yet had time to monitor and influence teaching and standards in their subjects.

Standards have risen steadily in Key Stage 2 since the last inspection. The accurate evaluation by the school of its own work, and the new systems in place, indicate a good capacity to improve. The school gives good value for money.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the teaching of the more able Key Stage 1 pupils, particularly in mathematics, so that they can reach their potential in Year 2.
- Make better use of the monitoring of pupils' progress to identify any potentially underachieving pupils more quickly.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Standards are well above average and pupils achieve well. Children enter the school with skills that are above the usual standard for their age. They make good progress in the Reception Year because of good teaching and purposeful activities, and almost all achieve at least the expected goals by the time they enter Year 1.

After four years in which test results were often above average in Year 2, the new assessments fell in 2006 to below average. The school attributes this apparent fall in standards to excessively rigorous assessments in which the teachers judged pupils' standards too harshly. Observation of the work of these pupils, now in Year 3, supports the school's view that pupils are currently making good progress. Examination of the Year 2 pupils' work indicates that most are working at the expected level. However, too few of them are exceeding it, particularly in mathematics, because the work is sometimes too easy for the more able pupils.

The results of the 2006 national tests for Year 6 were well above average in English and science and average in mathematics. A high proportion of pupils exceeded the expected standard in mathematics and science, because of a good emphasis on investigational activities and solving problems. The school met its overall targets and exceeded them in English and science.

Pupils with learning difficulties and the small number of pupils for whom English is an additional language achieve well because of the good level of support they receive.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' personal development and well-being are good. Pupils are confident, happy and articulate. They enjoy school and attendance is above average. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is also good. Good relationships throughout the school ensure that all pupils feel well looked after and valued. Pupils know how to keep healthy and safe and do their very best to adopt healthy lifestyles by eating plenty of fresh fruit and vegetables and by participating in a wide range of sporting activities in and out of school. They have good attitudes to learning, are keen, enthusiastic and take a pride in their work. The school's behaviour policy is applied consistently and pupils behave well. Pupils contribute enthusiastically to their school community through the school council and as class monitors. Older pupils apply formally to be prefects and, if chosen, play a significant part in the welfare of younger pupils. Pupils make an exceptional contribution to the local and wider community through their participation in inter-school activities and in raising money for charity. The school supports the education of a boy in Africa and helped to fund the establishment of an African school called Pencott. They are well prepared for the next stage in their education through good links with several local high schools and the good standards they achieve.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are good. Lessons are usually well planned so that pupils understand what is required of them. Questioning techniques are used very effectively to check understanding and to give pupils opportunities to explain their ideas. As a result, pupils are confident and eager to learn and develop good understanding.

Teachers mark pupils' work regularly and make useful comments to help pupils improve. Most teachers have high expectations and usually provide an appropriate challenge for all pupils. However, the work set for the more able pupils is sometimes too easy so they do not make the progress that they should. Occasionally, whole-class teaching goes on too long and the pace is too slow. Teaching assistants work well with class teachers to support pupils so that those with learning difficulties and disabilities make good progress.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is good. It is well balanced and meets all statutory requirements. There is a good emphasis on literacy and numeracy skills. Provision for information and communication technology (ICT) has recently improved and now all pupils have at least one hour a week in the new computer suite. This helps pupils make faster progress and attain higher standards.

Careful planning ensures that pupils in parallel classes have similar experiences. There is a good programme of personal, social and health education, which is enriched by the contribution of outside speakers about such matters as bullying, prejudice and racism to pupils in Years 3 and 4.

The curriculum in the Foundation Stage is good. It is firmly based on purposeful, practical activities, which show a good understanding of how young children learn.

There is a good range of extra-curricular activities, including many different sports, which contributes to pupils' enjoyment and well-being. Good links with local high schools enrich pupils' experiences through sharing facilities and expertise. This includes a programme for able and talented pupils in music, drama and science. Good use is made of trips, visits and visitors to enhance learning, and pupils in Year 6 develop independence and team skills through an outdoor activities residential experience.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Care, guidance and support are good. All the expected procedures are in place to safeguard pupils and parents appreciate the school's caring ethos. Good induction procedures help children settle quickly into school, and taster days in the local high schools help to prepare pupils well for the next stage of their education.

The learning assistants are well deployed in class to support pupils with learning difficulties. The school has good links with outside agencies and receives specialist support when needed. The school works closely with the welfare department of a local employer to support families whose first language is not English, enabling pupils to settle quickly and make good progress.

Systems are newly in place to track pupils' progress. Some staff are using the information well to help improve the progress of pupils; for example, the teaching of pupils of similar ability together has led to an improvement in progress in mathematics in Key Stage 2. However, in some classes it is not yet being used quickly enough to identify potential underachievement of individuals.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The school is led and managed well. After a period of considerable change, with three headteachers in two years, the new headteacher is providing much needed stability. Parents appreciate this and now see the school moving forward.

The good relationships in school, fostered by the headteacher and staff, with the clear focus on the care and support of pupils, make a valuable contribution to pupils' good personal development.

The headteacher is supported well by the senior leadership team who are spearheading initiatives to boost pupils' progress and personal development throughout the school. The school's evaluation of its work is accurate in all respects. Some of the subject leaders are new to their work and have not yet had time to influence provision and standards in their subjects.

Governance is good. Governors have provided a much needed continuity during the time of disrupted leadership and are a welcome presence in the school. The parents value the recent introduction of a parents' forum, led by the headteacher and chair of governors. Prudent financial planning has helped the school to cope well with changes in staffing and responsibilities.

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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	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

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	1
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	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	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	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

Cottam Primary School

Haydocks Lane

Cottam

Preston

Lancashire

PR4 0NY

8 March 2007

Dear Pupils

Thank you for making Mrs. Byrom, Mr. McKay and me feel so welcome when we inspected your school recently. We enjoyed speaking to you all and listening to your views. You told us how much you enjoy school and all the activities on offer. We were impressed by your knowledge of how to stay healthy and by the extra work you do in school as prefects, monitors and members of the school council. You behave well and this helps to make Cottam a happy and friendly place.

We think Cottam is a good school that looks after you all well. Lessons are interesting and teachers give you the chance to ask questions and to explain how you have worked things out. This helps you to make good progress and reach a good standard by the time you move on to the high school.

We think that some things could be even better. Some pupils in Key Stage 1 could be set harder work, especially in mathematics. The teachers could check your progress more thoroughly to make sure that you all do as well as you can.

Yours sincerely

Mrs. Shirley Herring

Lead inspector