

Distington Community School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	133264
Local Authority	Cumbria
Inspection number	294051
Inspection dates	26–27 June 2007
Reporting inspector	Jackie Barnes

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	112
School	
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Doreen Belford
Headteacher	Mr Andrew Cannon
Date of previous school inspection	1 February 2003
School address	Church Road Distington Workington Cumbria CA14 5TE
Telephone number	01946 830526
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

This is a small school that serves the village of Distington near Workington in an area of mixed owner-occupied and local authority housing. Pupils' entitlement to free school meals is well above the national average which reflects some of the economic factors in the area. Almost all pupils are from White British backgrounds. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities (LDD) is below average although more than usual have statements of special educational need (SEN). When children start school in the Nursery, attainment is below that expected for their age, especially in literacy and numeracy. The number of pupils in different year groups varies considerably. The school has recently extended its accommodation to provide specialist facilities for the community that are also available for the pupils, and further building is in process as part of plans for the new Children's Centre.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

This is a satisfactory school. It has the confidence of its parents who particularly value the good care and support the school provides for their children. Pupils' personal development and well-being are good. The welcoming atmosphere encourages them to participate from the time they start school. Good relationships underpin pupils' confidence that they are safe in the school community. Older pupils are proud to explain that they have been trained to help resolve minor disputes in the playground and make sure pupils are not lonely. This works well. Pupils enjoy school. They make friends and work cooperatively in lessons. They know how to keep safe and healthy, and most take part with enthusiasm in the wide range of experiences the school provides, especially physical activities. They are keen to learn and behave well. A small number of pupils are successfully supported by staff and pupils, to help them reduce the impact of their behaviour difficulties on their learning.

The leadership and management of the school are satisfactory. Extensive changes in the school's role in the community and to the building since the last inspection have been well led by the headteacher with strong support from the governing body. The school now has such facilities as a conference room, a large sports hall, dedicated computer and art rooms and a large library. Due attention has been given to the pupils' safety while ensuring the community is welcomed and can take advantage of the provision for meetings, adult education, physical activity and creative experiences. For a small school these are significant changes. They have been managed effectively and the pupils have the benefit of good quality provision, especially in the arts and information and communication technology (ICT), which the staff use well to extend the range of pupils' experiences and enjoyment. However, the leadership and management have been only partially successful in efforts to raise the low standards evident in the last inspection. The local authority has provided additional support in the last year and improvements are now evident.

Achievement is satisfactory and standards are below average overall. Children make good progress in the Foundation Stage, especially in personal and social development, mainly due to good teaching based on careful planning of their progress. By the end of Reception, most children are close to the attainment expected for their age, although literacy and numeracy remain the weaker areas of their learning. Over the next two years, progress is satisfactory and standards are about average, although they vary from year-to-year as does the number of pupils in each year group. Results of national assessments for Year 2 in 2006 were about average, which was a considerable improvement on previous years. The most competent pupils have rarely attained the higher Level 3 in reading and writing but the school's data and pupils' work indicate a small number of the current Year 2 pupils are now working at this level. Standards in English, mathematics and science by Year 6 are below average. Pupils' progress from Year 2 to Year 6 has been too slow for several years. However, it is gradually improving and most pupils are now making satisfactory progress, although some pupils are not yet working to their full capacity.

Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Teachers know their subjects and pupils well. Attention is given to each pupil's needs, and some make good progress, particularly those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities who have considerable additional support for their learning and high expectations of what they can achieve. Recent initiatives in the school's assessment systems, including setting targets for individual pupils, have increased the focus on accelerating pupils' progress. Each class includes pupils across a wide range of attainment and age and the

planning of lessons still tends to be too general to enable all pupils to make the progress they should. Too few of the more capable pupils have suitably challenging work. Subject leaders are beginning to influence the teaching and learning in their areas of responsibility, but are not using assessment information rigorously enough to keep a close check on pupils' achievement. Improvement since the previous inspection is satisfactory and the school has satisfactory capacity to improve.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards in English, mathematics and science particularly for the most capable pupils.
- Use assessment more effectively to plan the learning for pupils with differing abilities and check they are making the best progress they can.
- Clarify the school's approach to planning teaching and learning in classes that include mixed-age groups and a wide range of competence.
- Set clear expectations for the role of the subject leaders in improving the pupils' standards and progress.

A small proportion of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Children start the school with considerable individual differences in what they know and can do, but overall attainment is below expectations especially in literacy and numeracy. Whatever their starting point, they make good progress in the Foundation Stage especially in their personal and physical development, where progress is often very good. Attainment is close to what is expected by the time they enter Year 1 although literacy and numeracy are below. The challenge the school faces through the rest of the school remains in the areas of literacy and numeracy. National assessment results over time show a very variable pattern, partly due to the varying size of individual year groups that have differed from 13 to 22 in the last three years. However, it is clear that pupils have not made sufficient progress in Key Stage 2 in the past and results should be higher. Although this is still the case, improvements in progress have been made and are beginning to make a difference in the standards attained by pupils in both key stages. Progress is now satisfactory overall, although standards remain below average.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

The progress pupils make in their personal development is a strength of the school. They contribute well to the calm and welcoming atmosphere, and take their responsibilities to each other and the school community seriously. It is clear they enjoy putting into practice what they have learned about keeping physically active, and their good knowledge of health issues shows particularly when they are discussing healthy eating. Their respect for each other falters on occasions during play, but is soundly based as their supportive response to their friends with behaviour difficulties shows. Their personal qualities, especially their confidence, ability to cooperate with others, and positive attitudes, make a good contribution to their future prospects, although skills in literacy and numeracy are not yet at this point. Pupils' social, moral, spiritual and cultural development is good. They have good opportunities to develop their interest in the arts, including the arts in different cultures, and particularly enjoy practical activities. Most

have good records of attendance and the school follows up on those whose occasional absences are evident.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Where teaching is strongest, expectations are high and the learning planned for pupils of differing abilities is clearly identified with both teaching and tasks having enough challenge to encourage brisk progress. This is most clearly evident when pupils are taught in small groups, either withdrawn or within a class lesson. When lessons are organised to allow such teaching to take place, teaching assistants make a particularly good contribution to the pupils' learning and class teachers spend more time in sustained teaching of the more capable pupils. In many lessons, teaching and learning are less effective because each class includes pupils across a wide range of ability and age, and the teaching and learning only rarely matches the full range of the pupils' needs. Planning is too general, with pupils at different stages of learning and ability having very similar teaching and tasks. Although staff work hard to help individuals complete their tasks during the lesson, this does not always lead to suitable progress over time if the tasks are not suitably challenging. The teaching team has a strong commitment to improvement and their own self-evaluation has already enabled them to identify the need to use assessment more effectively to accelerate pupils' progress. The school now has the data to enable them to do this.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The school has a satisfactory curriculum with good provision for personal development. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities take full advantage of the wide range of experiences offered. The provision clearly adds to pupils' enjoyment but is not yet fully exploited to ensure they all make the progress they should in literacy and numeracy. Specialist teaching in music and in modern languages is well supported by the school's good facilities, as is the use of computers. Links with local businesses and opportunities to deal with finance, such as the school council's budget for improvements in the playground, effectively broaden the pupils' experiences. These interesting activities effectively contribute to the pupils' motivation to learn.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Staff take good care of pupils' welfare and guide them well in developing their personal skills and good behaviour. Relationships are good and pupils are confident that staff provide help and support when needed. The pupils' safety is given suitable attention, and arrangements for safeguarding meet current government requirements. Good support is provided for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and they receive clear guidance on how to improve their work. The academic guidance for other pupils is less consistently effective as their targets are not systematically linked to teaching or tasks which enable them to make their best progress.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The school is calm and orderly. Self-evaluation is based on suitably wide consultation and is generally accurate. The headteacher and governors have managed the extensive changes to the school's role in the community well, including the considerable changes in the building. As a result, the school has good facilities and involvement in local activities. The leadership and management have been less successful in the drive to improve achievement and standards since the last inspection. A good working relationship has been established with the local authority which has provided an intensive support programme for over a year. This partnership has led to improvements in the school's systems for assessment and enhanced teachers' skills. The impact on pupils' progress of these initiatives is evident, although not yet consolidated. All staff are subject leaders and, although not leading the drive for better standards in their subjects, are strongly committed to school improvement. The governing body is well organised with several experienced governors. The school provides satisfactory value for money.

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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?	3
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	3
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3
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	3
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	3

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	3
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3
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.

Annex A

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	3
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	3
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

28 June 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Distington Community School, Cumbria, CA14 5TE.

Thank you for making me so welcome when I visited your school. You helped me to see how well you behave and how much you enjoy school. You particularly enjoy all the new equipment and space that you have now the school has been extended. I was pleased to hear that you know how to keep yourselves safe and healthy, and that you are confident that the staff will always help you if you have a problem. You look after each other well, make friends and have good arrangements in the playground for older children to make sure you always have someone to play with you.

In lessons I found that you were keen to learn, worked well with each other and were often most successful when you were taught in small groups. When you start school in the Nursery you make good progress, and for some of you this continues through school. However, many of you could do even better as you get older. So I have asked your headteacher and governors to help you reach higher standards in English, mathematics and science by planning your learning more carefully and checking that you are making the best progress you can. They will make sure that the way you are taught and the work you do is just right for each of you.

I know you will help by keeping up your good behaviour and support for each other, and by doing all you can to concentrate and make sure your work is as good as you can make it.

Best wishes for the future.

Yours sincerely

J M Barnes

Lead Inspector