

# Black Combe Junior School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	112160
<b>Local Authority</b>	Cumbria
<b>Inspection number</b>	301704
<b>Inspection dates</b>	12–13 July 2007
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Keith Oglesby

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Junior
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	7–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School	163
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Miss Margaret Bratley
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs Edna Overton (Acting headteacher)
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	1 June 2003
<b>School address</b>	Moor Road Millom Cumbria LA18 5DT
<b>Telephone number</b>	01229 772862
<b>Fax number</b>	01229 771308

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

## Description of the school

This is a smaller than average junior school. It serves a former mining community in South West Cumbria. Almost all the pupils are of White British background and a small minority are learning English as their second language. The proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals is above average. The proportion with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, including those with a statement of special educational needs, is well above average. The school holds the Inclusion Charter award.

## 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, much valued by parents and pupils. One parent spoke for many in her comment, 'I feel very grateful and satisfied that my son has had such a quality junior school experience.' The school takes exceptional care of all its pupils and their personal development is outstanding. Teaching is good and pupils enjoy an interesting curriculum with lots of opportunities to join in extra activities and learn new skills. Consequently, they enjoy school, behave well, work hard and want to learn. The school makes imaginative use of its accommodation to create a welcoming and busy place to learn. There are many links with the local community, which enrich pupils' experiences and develop their social skills.

Pupils of all abilities achieve well and standards are much better than they were at the time of the last inspection. Pupils' attainment when they join the school varies from year to year, but in most years it is below that typical for their age. They quickly start to make good progress because of effective teaching and support. By the time they leave, standards match those seen in most schools. The more able pupils, and the large proportion of those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, achieve equally well from their starting points. This is because teachers take great care to match work to individual needs and high quality support is provided for those who need it.

Good leadership and management at all levels means that staff work together well in the pupils' best interests. The acting headteacher, ably supported by senior staff, has successfully led a united team in their drive to raise standards and promote outstanding personal development of the pupils. She has made good use of the many strengths of the staff and governors to ensure that pupils achieve well, academically and personally. Self-evaluation is accurate and self-critical. Rigorous analysis of pupils' progress leads to swift action where needed. For example, strategies to improve performance in mathematics and writing are already having an effect on standards.

Teaching is good and sometimes outstanding. Lessons are lively and well managed events, with pupils busy and involved. Teachers use a range of methods to keep pupils motivated and help them to understand new ideas. Pupils are encouraged to say when they are not sure about something because they know they can expect help and encouragement. 'The teachers are always there for you', said one boy, 'they really support us'. A current priority is to involve pupils more closely in analysing the quality of their own work. Several good strategies have been introduced. Some pupils say that these help them to understand how well they are doing and what they have to do to improve their work. However, procedures vary from class to class, so the impact on progress is not yet as great as it could be.

Pupils prosper at this school and are well prepared to move on. They know what constitutes healthy living and have a mature awareness of the importance of making good decisions and acting safely. They are tolerant, thoughtful and responsible young people, proud of their school and their successes. The school has done well since the last inspection and has good capacity to continue to improve.

### What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards further by reviewing and making more consistent use of methods to help pupils evaluate their own work and understand what they must do to improve it.

## Achievement and standards

### Grade: 2

Pupils achieve well. They start school with a wide range of skills and abilities, but overall attainment is below that typical for their age, particularly in literacy. They make good progress in all classes because the teaching is good. By the end of Year 6, pupils reach average standards found nationally. These standards have been achieved for several years. They are much better than they were at the time of the last inspection.

Inspection evidence and information provided by the school show that pupils in the current Year 6 have maintained this improvement. They have achieved particularly well in English. Many of this group joined the school with weaknesses in reading and writing, but have made good progress to reach average standards. This is because teachers have made effective use of assessment to identify areas for improvement and the curriculum has been adapted to meet individual pupil's needs. The school has also introduced some effective strategies to help pupils improve the quality of their writing. These are also helping to reverse a recent trend of underachievement in the performance of boys.

Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make the same good progress as other pupils because of the high quality support they receive. The more able pupils also achieve well because teachers make sure that they have work that stretches them. In the national tests, the proportion of pupils who reach higher than expected levels is similar to other schools.

## Personal development and well-being

### Grade: 1

Pupils' personal development, including their social, moral, spiritual and cultural development, is outstanding. Pupils take a great deal of pride in their school and make the most of everything that it offers. Parents appreciate this; one wrote, 'He enjoys being allowed to participate and have views and opinions, he often comes home full of what he has done that day'. Pupils enjoy lessons and work hard. Behaviour is usually excellent. Those who find this difficult are managed effectively, some of these make great strides in improving their attitude to learning. Attendance is good.

Pupils have well developed ideas on what it takes to keep them fit, safe and healthy. They make a very good contribution to the school community; for example, through the work of the effective school council. Pupils respond well when asked to take charge. This can be seen in the quiet and efficient way they carry out responsibilities, as well as the productive way they work in pairs or groups during lessons. They are also very involved with the local community; for example, through the church, the Children's Centre and other schools. They raise funds enthusiastically for a variety of charities. Pupils leave this school with positive attitudes and exceptional social and moral skills. They have secure basic skills and use technology confidently. They are well prepared for the next stage of their education.

## Quality of provision

### Teaching and learning

#### Grade: 2

Teaching is good throughout the school and is sometimes outstanding. Consequently, pupils enjoy lessons, work hard and make good progress. The quality of relationships and mutual

respect is a strength everywhere. Pupils appreciate the efforts teachers make to help them and to make their work interesting. Some described their lessons as, 'Just the right mix of strictness and fun'. Teachers plan carefully and make sure that time is used purposefully. They are quick to spot where some pupils may be struggling or are ready for an extra challenge. The excellent team of teaching assistants make a valuable contribution to pupils' progress and personal development; in particular, helping teachers to respond flexibly to individual pupil's circumstances and needs.

## **Curriculum and other activities**

### **Grade: 2**

The curriculum is good and meets the needs of pupils well. A strength of the school is the trouble it takes to respond to each pupil's needs and circumstances. Examples include: the careful way that teaching groups and support groups are organised; the extra sessions provided for those pupils who lack confidence and self-esteem. Computers are used imaginatively to support individual learning. Teachers constantly look for new ways to improve learning; for example, in the 'Thinking Hats' programme to develop discussion and reasoning skills. Some of these innovations are showing promising results, but are too recent to have had an impact on standards.

Learning is enriched in a variety of ways, including sports, musical performances and French lessons; for instance, pupils in Years 3 and 4 amazed their parents by confidently performing a play in French. The school describes its aim as 'to get more pupils to take risks, move into new areas and have chances to succeed'. Parents and pupils recognise this; for example, one girl said, 'I never dreamed I would try tag rugby, but now I love it'. There are good sporting links with other schools and the school has a good reputation in the county for its successes in tennis and cricket.

There are a good range of visitors to the school and regular opportunities for pupils to learn in the wider community. These include pupils working with the local planning department and businesses in making an impressive wildlife area with a cycle training track.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 1**

The quality of care, guidance and support for all pupils is outstanding. It is particularly effective for those who have learning or personal difficulties. The atmosphere in school is calm and purposeful, which is especially helpful in getting vulnerable pupils to settle quickly each day to learning. Parents appreciate the school's commitment to their children's happiness and well being and its prompt response to any problems. Excellent links with outside agencies ensure that all pupils, including those at risk, receive the support they need. Arrangements to keep pupils safe are clear to all staff and meet current government requirements. Pupils say they feel well cared for, know that their views are respected and that they can discuss any concerns with adults.

The school has very good systems to monitor pupils' progress and to give them any extra guidance or support that they need. This is a good improvement since the last inspection and is one of the reasons for improved standards and excellent personal development. A current priority is to encourage pupils to think about their own progress and to give them more detailed advice on what they need to do to improve. Pupils like this and say that it helps them to learn.

## Leadership and management

### Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good. The acting headteacher has moved the school forward exceptionally through a long period of uncertainty. The school knows its strengths and weaknesses well and is very self-critical. Subject leaders keep a close eye on standards and how well pupils are learning. The governors are involved, well informed and supportive. Finance is well managed and the school provides good value for money. The school is using effective assessment systems to provide staff with a very detailed and manageable picture of pupils' progress. Leaders have introduced some good strategies to share this information with the pupils and show them exactly what they need to do to improve their work. These are working well, but are not yet used consistently in all classes.

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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>	<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 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	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

<b>How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The behaviour of learners	1
The attendance of learners	2
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	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>	2
<b>How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?</b>	1

<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.

## Annex A

**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	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

14 July 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Black Combe Junior School, Millom, Cumbria, LA18 5DT

As you know, Mr Stafford and I spent two days in your school recently. We enjoyed our visit, as I am sure everyone does, and would like to thank you for being so helpful and friendly. Many of you, and your parents, told us that you were proud of your school and enjoyed coming. We agree with you, it is a good school. You have a great team of teachers and helpers; they work hard to make sure that you are happy and safe so you can learn. You have a school building with lots of interesting places to work and play. We were pleased to see how well you take care of it. We were impressed by your ICT area and the interesting work you do there. We know you enjoy all the chances to try new sports and visit new places. One thing we especially liked was the way you behave, listen well and work hard. We thought that when some of you occasionally got upset about something, the adults were wonderful in sorting it out.

We liked all the ways that teachers help you to look at your work, think about what is good about it and how it could be just a bit better next time. For example, some teachers show you how the different levels work, you have your assessment books and some of you have your personal targets. We liked the secret code in some of your books, green, orange and red. Your new mathematics booklets should also be very useful. All these, and others, are good ideas and you said they helped you. Therefore, we have suggested that your teachers get together and make sure they use the ones that work best in every class. That way, by the time you reach Year 6, you should be experts.

Yours sincerely

Keith Oglesby

Lead Inspector