

Seaton Infant School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	112139
Local Authority	Cumbria
Inspection number	301720
Inspection dates	26–27 June 2007
Reporting inspector	Geoffrey Yates

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	3–7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	212
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Trevor Fee
Headteacher	Mrs Lesley Grace
Date of previous school inspection	1 June 2003
School address	High Seaton Workington Cumbria CA14 1NP
Telephone number	01900 325233
Fax number	01900 325234

Age group	3–7
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This is an average sized infant school in a semi-rural residential area where socio-economic conditions are average. The proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals is below average. The attainment on entry to the Foundation Stage is typical for children of their age and the proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below average. Almost all pupils are from White British families and there are no pupils at an early stage of learning English. The school has gained many awards including the Artsmark gold award and the Sports Active award. It is one of a very small number of schools nationally to have an award for the high quality of its information and communication technology (ICT) provision.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

This is an outstanding school. One parent sums up the views of many, saying, 'This school has moved on from being a very good school to become an excellent school which cares greatly for the welfare and education of all the children.' Standards in reading, writing and mathematics have been consistently well above average for a number of years and have risen faster than the national trend of improvement in all three subjects.

Pupils' personal development and well-being are outstanding as a result of the emphasis placed by the school on their personal, social and emotional development from the moment they start school. Pupils enjoy school, behave exceedingly well and relationships with one another are excellent. Care, guidance and support are outstanding and all staff provide excellent care for each pupil, both in pastoral provision and educational guidance. Pupils are aware of the need to stay healthy and safe and understand that rules are there to help them to do that. The excellent relationships that members of staff have with the pupils ensure that the pupils feel valued and respected. This fosters their self-esteem and confidence. Pupils have many opportunities to develop and reinforce their understanding of the benefits of healthy lifestyles and even the youngest children know about healthy food and the importance of exercise. Pupils' confidence and basic skills prepare them very well for the next stage of their education.

Pupils' achievement is outstanding and standards are well above average throughout the school. When the children first join the Nursery, their attainment is as expected for children of this age. They make excellent progress and, by the time they enter Year 1, they exceed the standards expected nationally in all areas of learning. Pupils continue to make rapid progress in Years 1 and 2. The more able pupils do exceptionally well in reading, writing and mathematics. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make outstanding progress because they receive high quality support. The school's results in the 2007 national assessments show that high standards have been maintained.

Teaching and learning are outstanding. All members of staff have high expectations of pupils' achievement and possess very good subject knowledge. Pupils are given challenging work which is closely matched to their abilities. Provision for the Foundation Stage is outstanding because the staff provide an exciting environment, both inside and outside, which stimulates all aspects of their learning and ensures very high achievement and excellent progress in developing confidence, curiosity and basic skills. The curriculum for Years 1 and 2 is excellent and subjects and topics are planned thoroughly. The content of pupils' writing is of high quality, but the quality of presentation and development of pupils' handwriting is inconsistent.

The headteacher, with very good support from her deputy and subject leaders, provides excellent leadership and management. The headteacher is the driving force behind the school's success. She motivates all members of the school community to participate with her for the good of the school. The school's self-evaluation of its effectiveness is accurate and has led to continuous improvement, resulting in better management, higher achievement by pupils and faster rates of progress. The school gives outstanding value for money and, because it is always looking for ways to improve, has an outstanding capacity to improve even further.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that teachers are more consistent in improving the quality of pupils' handwriting and the presentation of their work.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

Achievement is outstanding and standards are consistently and exceptionally high. All pupils make excellent progress from their starting points. The progress of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is outstanding because of the high quality support they receive from teachers and support staff. Outstanding provision in the Foundation Stage ensures that children make excellent progress. By the end of their Reception year, all children reach the goals expected for them in all areas of their learning and a majority exceed them. A key factor in pupils' success is that they make progress not only in the classroom but also in the outside area, where they can consolidate and extend their learning. By the end of Year 2, the results of the national assessments and tests show that pupils consistently reach standards significantly above the national average in reading, writing and mathematics. Many pupils are already working at the level expected of pupils two years older than they are. These results have been maintained for a number of years and the latest teachers' assessments indicate that they are similar this year to those in the past. The reasons for the pupils' excellent progress are the high quality of teaching and a very good partnership with parents which supports children's learning of the basic skills of reading, writing and mathematics.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is outstanding. Pupils clearly enjoy their lessons and have excellent attitudes to their work. This is evident, for example, in the popularity of extra-curricular activities and above average attendance. Pupils have a keen awareness of personal safety and how to lead a healthy lifestyle. This is partly because of the achievement of the National Healthy Schools Award and also the raising of pupils' awareness of environmental issues, both in and out of school. Pupils contribute exceptionally well to the school's community and its locality. They have many opportunities to give their opinions and to support new initiatives.

The gardening club members ensure that the outside learning environment continues to be top quality. In addition, the school contributes very positively to community projects, such as wildlife areas outside the school. Excellent relationships, friendships and behaviour ensure that the school is a great place to be.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 1

Teaching and learning are consistently of a very high standard. In all classes, highly effective teaching is based on very good relationships which ensure that pupils try hard. The teachers' questioning is particularly effective in encouraging and developing children's speaking and listening skills. Teaching of the key skills of reading, writing and mathematics is very strong but the teachers do not neglect other subjects. Outstanding teaching in the Foundation Stage gives children a flying start to their schooling. Teachers and teaching assistants quickly establish very good relationships and set very high expectations in all aspects of pupils' personal development and other areas of learning. In all classes, the teaching of phonics and early reading skills is very successful and has raised standards of reading since the previous inspection.

Although the content of their writing is excellent, pupils do not always take enough care with their handwriting and to present their work well. Teachers make accurate use of assessment information to ensure that work is very well matched to pupils' abilities and builds on prior experiences. Support staff are effective in working with small groups on intervention programmes designed to overcome any possible learning difficulties at an early stage.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The curriculum is outstanding. The planning for pupils' personal and social development is excellent. The building is bright and spacious, providing a stimulating environment, both inside and out. In the Foundation Stage, outdoor facilities are used very well to enrich children's play and enhance their learning. Practical, hands-on activities engage pupils well and foster independence in learning. Visits, for example to Mirehouse and Muncaster, together with visitors and special events, add richness to the curriculum for all pupils in the school and helps broaden their horizons. The school ensures that pupils use and develop their ICT skills across subjects very well. The curriculum includes plenty of opportunities for pupils to learn about how to keep safe and healthy; for example, how to handle food and tools.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

The school provides outstanding care, guidance and support for all its pupils. All members of staff know the pupils very well and the school works very closely with parents so that their children's needs are met. Pupils feel safe and know that they can talk to staff if they have any worries. Child protection procedures are very good, and all mandatory checks for safeguarding children are carried out. Effective arrangements help children to settle into the Foundation Stage and prepare Year 2 pupils for their next stage of education. The school's procedures for educational guidance are outstanding because they have a clear impact on pupils' high achievement levels. The pupils have a clear understanding of their achievements and of their targets for further improvement. Their progress is checked carefully and targets are constantly revised to ensure pupils are challenged consistently.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

The headteacher and deputy headteacher provide outstanding leadership and set a clear direction for the school. They set high expectations for standards and the quality of provision, which ensure that the school continuously improves. All staff members, governors and parents share that vision and contribute fully to the school's continuing success and, because of its inclusiveness, the school is at the heart of the community. Improvement since the previous inspection has been outstanding. The headteacher, well supported by staff, has successfully steered the school since its last inspection, and has firmly embedded outstanding teaching, achievement and quality of care. The headteacher knows the academic and personal qualities of every pupil and uses this knowledge well to ensure that they reach their potential. Self-evaluation is rigorous and accurate in its judgements, reflecting what has already been achieved. The school is justifiably recognised by the parents as 'a school that goes from strength to strength'. Governance is excellent. All governors understand the school's strengths extremely

well and are equally clear about where the school can do better. They have an exceptionally clear role in the school's self-evaluation.

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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?	1
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	1
The standards ¹ reached by learners	1
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	1
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	1

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	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	1
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	1

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	1
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1

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?	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	1
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	1
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1
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 Seaton Infant School, High Seaton, CA14 1NP

I am writing to you to thank you for your help during my visit to your school and to share my thoughts with you. Your school is outstanding and one of the very best schools, not just in Cumbria but in the whole of England. I was delighted to see how friendly you are with each other and how much you enjoy learning. You behave very well and work very hard. It was a pleasure to talk to you and to see you learn.

I agree with you that your headteacher, teachers and other members of staff help you very much if you have a problem or personal issue. The younger children in the Nursery and Reception classes get a great start to school life. I would have loved to have had time to play with them in SS Seaton! In Years 1 and 2 you carry on making very good progress and achieve outstandingly well in reading, writing and mathematics. I was very impressed with the content of what you write but your work could sometimes be neater and I have asked the school to help you concentrate on making your handwriting as good as it can be.

Your headteacher ensures that all of you have a very caring place in which to learn. It is good to see that many of you know what you need to do to be safe and also to keep fit and healthy. I hope that you continue to enjoy school and wish you the very best for your future.

Yours sincerely

Geoffrey Yates

Lead inspector