

Burgh-by-Sands School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	112106
Local Authority	Cumbria
Inspection number	310784
Inspection dates	21–22 April 2008
Reporting inspector	Derek Sleightholme

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	
School	75
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Wendy Bolton
Headteacher	Mr Ken Reid
Date of previous school inspection	1 May 2004
School address	Burgh-by-Sands Carlisle Cumbria CA5 6AP
Telephone number	01228 576397
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

This is a small rural village primary school serving scattered communities. Although there has been a slight decline in pupil numbers recently, some parents from the urban fringe of Carlisle have opted to send their children to this school. All pupils are White British. The percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals is well below average. The percentage of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities varies considerably from year to year but is currently well above average.

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 some good features. Parents writing about the school typically refer to it as a 'lovely community school' with 'a family feel to it'.

The headteacher, working with a small but enthusiastic staff team, promotes the ethos of a friendly village school. Important outcomes of leadership are ensuring pupils develop well personally, are actively involved in the school and take responsibility. The school has experienced a period of staffing difficulties. The situation has been stabilised and a positive outcome is that, currently, pupils' progress is improving.

Pupils are friendly, well mannered and caring. They show positive attitudes to school and their behaviour is outstanding. Pupils love school and their attendance has improved and is above average. They recognise the value of healthy foods and their enthusiasm for sport and regular exercise has helped the school gain the 'Activemark'. Pupils feel safe because they know they can access help promptly from staff who know them personally.

Small year groups, sometimes as low as four pupils, mean the abilities of pupils vary from year to year. Achievement is satisfactory and standards in Year 2 and Year 6 are average. Pupils read clearly and with assurance during assemblies; they do not demonstrate such confidence when writing. School data and test results show most pupils, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, make satisfactory progress compared to their starting points. Currently, teaching is having a positive impact and is helping to accelerate pupils' progress, although it has not yet shown itself in improved standards and the overall impact remains satisfactory. Lessons are structured, engaging and appeal to pupils' interests. Despite these improvements in pupils' learning and progress, pupils capable of reaching higher standards are not always sufficiently challenged.

The curriculum is satisfactory with a clear focus on literacy and numeracy. It is enhanced, for example, by museum visits and a good range of school clubs. The 'Creative Partnership' and 'Connecting Classroom' projects typify the good partnerships that are established with visiting specialists and other schools. These contribute well to pupils' academic and personal development. Care and support are good. Guidance provided to pupils on the most important ways to improve lacks clarity because few pupils know the personal target they are working towards.

Leadership and management, including governance, are satisfactory. Self-evaluation is satisfactory but not as accurate as it might be. As a result, the school judges some aspects of its provision too generously. The school provides satisfactory value for money.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Provision in the Foundation Stage is good. Children enter the Nursery with levels of development that vary from year to year, broadly typical for their age but below this level in some years. Teaching is good with much attention to children's personal development. The high level of individual attention means children make quick gains in all the areas of learning. By the time they transfer into Year 1, most reach and some exceed the goals expected for their age. The curriculum is a good balance between adult-led and child-initiated activities, and motivates the children. For example, they enjoyed painting the wall of the outer area and, indoors, they learned to use the terms 'old' and 'new' as their teacher helped them handle household objects.

Transition arrangements with Year 1 are effective. Year 1 pupils join Reception children in the Foundation Unit for the daily afternoon session. Both benefit from mixing socially as they carry out practical activities such as filling containers with sand and water. Good leadership ensures the Foundation Unit is well organised. It is a safe and caring environment for children. The Unit leader has a clear plan to improve the outer area with additional resources to increase opportunities for independent learning.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the fluency and accuracy of pupils' writing and provide more opportunities to write at length.
- Match work more accurately to pupils' abilities, particularly that for more able pupils.
- Ensure pupils understand clearly the targets they are working towards.
- Improve the accuracy of self-evaluation.

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

Pupil achievement is satisfactory. By the end of Year 2 standards in reading, writing and mathematics are average. In 2007, few Year 2 pupils reached the higher level and this was only in reading. Pupils continue to make satisfactory progress and by the end of Year 6 standards are average in English, mathematics and science. A very small number of pupils took the 2007 statutory tests so comparisons with the national picture are unreliable. Most of these pupils reached the expected standard. The number of pupils reaching the higher level was lower in English than in mathematics and science because of weaknesses in writing. Results in mathematics show a continuing trend of improvement. A three-year decline in science has been arrested.

Staffing difficulties have affected most pupils at some stage in the past year. School data shows, until recently, progress of pupils in classes covering Years 1 to 4 has been slower than expected, particularly in Years 3 and 4. School leaders have ensured experienced temporary teachers work with pupils currently in these year groups. The inspection has found that these pupils are now making quicker progress. The outcomes of this improved learning are just starting to show in the tracking data. Pupils make good progress in Years 5 and 6 but this is too late to show in the measurable standards. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make similar progress to other pupils.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' personal development and well-being and their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are good. In their time at school, they become courteous, polite and responsible individuals. They are very good at looking after themselves and others. Older pupils naturally want to care for those of infant age. Behaviour is hard to fault. Pupils listen well in lessons and follow instructions carefully. They enjoy playtimes, especially when they cooperate to control the giant parachute on the school field. They also view service as school councillors and

playground mentors as important tasks. One councillor described the role as ‘fun and you get to talk about things that will make the school better’.

Pupils enjoy school and enthusiastically take part in practical tasks such as mathematics investigations. They know how important it is to be healthy. Through their efforts the school has achieved Healthy Schools status. In this happy, secure ‘family’ school they feel safe from harm, reassured by the approachability of adults who know them individually.

Pupils contribute well to school, the local community and good causes. They played a significant role during the village pageant commemorating the death of Edward I. The gains pupils make in basic skills prepare them satisfactorily to cope with life ahead.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching over time has led to pupils making satisfactory progress. Currently, however, much learning is good and pupils are beginning to make quicker gains in understanding. Lessons are lively and include stimulating activities that pupils love to take part in. Infant pupils, for example, enthusiastically listened to the tale of the ‘Owl and the Pussy Cat’ and traced the journey of these characters in a lesson that promoted lively speaking and good listening. Another strength is the way the planning of one subject helps pupils acquire skills in another. For example, pupils in a class covering Years 3 and 4 learned about the human skeleton by making hands with ‘moving’ fingers, a study unit that has successfully linked science, mathematics and design skills. Older pupils studied the characteristics of Henry VIII through poetry. A weakness, revealed through the scrutiny of pupils’ written work, is that teaching does not demand enough from more able pupils. Some of these pupils leave the Foundation Stage exceeding the expected goals but go on to produce work typical of the average ability pupils. They are therefore insufficiently stretched. Marking is used satisfactorily to point pupils to where improvement is needed.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum is satisfactory and meets requirements. It is enhanced well through partnerships, visits and visitors. Although timetables show that priority is given to literacy and numeracy, outcomes are that pupils make satisfactory progress. A strength is the provision for citizenship education. Parents contribute well to pupils’ learning. They have, for example, researched and provided family photographs to illustrate relationships between family members. These stimulate pupil discussions about the importance of family life. A curriculum weakness is that, too often, similar content is provided for all pupils. Consequently, insufficient openings are available for more able pupils to experience the enhanced learning that comes from pursuing more independent lines of enquiry.

Involvement in a creative partnership gives pupils the chance to access specialist music teaching. Visiting artists, including an African drummer, enhance cultural experiences. Pupils drafted letters of appreciation to the artists whose performance of a well-known musical they watched at a local theatre. Given the size of school and recent staffing difficulties, the school provides a good range of extra-curricular clubs including games, guitar tuition and art.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Care, guidance and support are good. Safeguarding procedures, including risk assessments and policies for child protection, health and safety, are in place and meet requirements. School logs confirm there have been no exclusions, racist incidents or inappropriate behaviour incidents. Pupils are supervised well. Their personal needs are met well because staff know their individual needs.

School tracking identifies those pupils who would benefit from extra support. The booster literacy and numeracy programmes in small groups enhance the sensitive support pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities receive during lessons. Good links with a range of professionals are established. Parents appreciate the way staff provide advice and support so that individual pupils' needs are generally met.

Academic guidance is satisfactory. Target setting is established and many pupils know the level they have reached. A weakness in guidance is that most pupils, when asked, do not recall the targets they are working towards.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Leadership and management, including governance, are satisfactory. There is a strong emphasis on promoting pupils' personal development but there is not the same level of focus and urgency on their academic development. Most parents hold positive views of the school. A small number feel there has been a lack of information on temporary staffing arrangements. The inspection found parents are periodically kept up-to-date by letters as well as by regular entries in the weekly newsletter.

Improvement since the previous inspection includes extension of Foundation Stage provision, a new library and more computers. Files show subject leaders have improved subject reviews, although staffing difficulties have limited this work recently. Satisfactory self-evaluation has ensured priorities for development are appropriate. A shortcoming is that the school rates some aspects of its provision too highly despite the fact that, so far, results indicate pupils make satisfactory progress. The school now has set targets for pupils to make better than expected progress.

Governors have a secure understanding of the standards pupils reach. They have discussed the impact of teaching as shown by progress data. Given the present organisational circumstances and the sound improvements made since the previous inspection, the school has satisfactory capacity to improve further.

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Annex A

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

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	3

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 extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	1
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?	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.

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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	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

23 April 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Burgh-by-Sands School, Cumbria, CA5 6AP

I enjoyed my recent visit to your school. Thank you for helping me. I enjoyed meeting you, visiting your classrooms, looking at your work and talking to you about your school. You were friendly and helpful, and I was impressed by your excellent behaviour and good attendance.

These are the things I found out about your school during my visit. You attend a satisfactory school but it offers you many opportunities to develop responsibility and to learn new skills. The staff care for you well because they all know you personally. People get on well together and it is a happy, smiley place to be! I know you understand the importance of keeping healthy and staying fit. You told me you feel safe and know how to get help. I also know that you enjoy the many activities such as working with a visiting music specialist that enhance the satisfactory curriculum you receive.

You make good progress in the Nursery and Reception. Your progress is then satisfactory up to the end of Year 6. By then most of you have reached the expected standards. Your reading is better than your writing so the school will be particularly helping you to improve your writing skills. Currently most of you are making better progress because you are enjoying the interesting and lively lessons where often your learning in one subject helps that in another. The school will ensure those of you capable of reaching higher standards should have tasks that challenge you even further. The school will be helping you to understand your targets so that you know which ones to really go for! You can help by continuing to work hard in lessons and do even better in your national tests. The school leaders will be using all their skills to make sure they know clearly which things in the school are working well.

The sight of you working as a real team to handle the giant parachute during playtime is a fond memory I will keep of your school.

I wish you and all the staff the very best for the future.

Yours sincerely

Derek Sleightholme

Lead inspector