

Bassenthwaite Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	112128
Local Authority	Cumbria
Inspection number	310790
Inspection date	20 September 2007
Reporting inspector	Pat Kime HMI

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	4-11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	47
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Deborah Binns
Headteacher	Mrs Sara Royle
Date of previous school inspection	1 January 2004
School address	Bassenthwaite Keswick Cumbria CA12 4QH
Telephone number	01768 776365
Fax number	01768 776365

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors.

Description of the school

This very small school is located within the Lake District National Park. It serves an area that is socially and economically advantaged compared with England as a whole. All the pupils are White British. Most of them live in the village of Bassenthwaite or on outlying farms. A few are from beyond the school's normal admissions area. In some year groups a high proportion of pupils start the school after the Reception year or leave before the end of Year 6. The school has identified an above average proportion of pupils as having learning difficulties and/or disabilities (LDD). Pupils are taught in mixed-age classes.

At the time of inspection, the headteacher and one of the other teachers were in their third week at the school.

The inspector evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school, and investigated the following issues: pupils' achievement; the quality of teaching and learning; and the leadership and management of the school, gathering evidence from: observations of lessons, assembly, and break time; discussions with staff, pupils and a governor; parents' and carers' replies to the inspection questionnaire; and examination of a wide range of documentary evidence provided by the school. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but inspectors found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given in its self-evaluation, were not justified, and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Bassenthwaite is a good school. The teaching is good. Pupils make good progress in their learning. They flourish in the family atmosphere and benefit from very good pastoral care. Their personal development is outstanding. The new headteacher's grasp of areas in which the school might improve and the staff's enthusiasm to take the school forward mean the capacity for further improvement is good.

When they start school, pupils' skills vary considerably between pupils and from year to year. Overall they can do more than most children of their age when they start. They make good progress throughout the school and achieve well. The school's records confirm this. Standards fluctuate according to the pupils' abilities. Results, and year-by-year variations in them, need to be interpreted with caution because of this factor and the very small number of pupils in each year. For instance, in 2007 there were only three pupils in Year 6. Nevertheless, academic standards have been above average at the end of Key Stage 2 for several years and this is a strong indication that pupils are doing well. Within this positive picture, achievement in writing and mathematics is not as good as in reading and science. The school has identified this and has sound plans to improve matters.

Pupils' personal development, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is outstanding. Parents recognise how well the school's family atmosphere and the quality of pastoral care help their children to gain confidence and grow in self-esteem. Pupils develop mature, positive attitudes to learning which make a considerable contribution to their academic progress. Their excellent social and moral development is seen in their relationships, their mutual support, and the way they embrace local and charitable causes. All pupils play their part in making the school a happy and purposeful learning community. They also contribute to the local community, for instance by taking part in village events. Pupils are active and they have a very good understanding of how to keep themselves safe in and out of school. They know that exercise and diet are important for a healthy lifestyle but have a limited understanding of why this is so. Attendance rates are broadly average, though from time to time they are skewed by poor attendance of a very small number of pupils.

Teaching is good throughout the school. Teachers manage their classes well. They establish an excellent working atmosphere and very good relationships. Pupils respond very well, applying themselves extremely well to their work and behaving in an exemplary manner. Teachers ensure that work is suitably matched to the range of pupils' learning needs in mixed-age classes. In the best lessons work is closely tailored to individuals' needs. Pupils have well considered individual targets. They know them and are committed to achieving them. The teaching assistant is used very effectively to work with groups within class lessons and to provide additional help for pupils who need an extra boost or who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities. However, test results suggest that the most able might not always be pushed on as much as they could be.

The school's curriculum covers all that is required and is planned to ensure that, in the mixed-age classes, pupils tackle more demanding work each year. The resources of the local area are used well to enrich the curriculum. For example, older pupils enjoy a good range of adventurous activities at a nearby centre and the younger ones study contrasting local woodland areas. Links with a local club enable pupils to benefit from sailing lessons. Some effective connections are made between subjects to add coherence to pupils' studies and the local dimension is

brought in. For instance, in their history lessons, pupils learned about the abolition of slavery. This study increased their knowledge about the history of Whitehaven, then a major port with links to the slave trade. A range of activities beyond lessons is offered and, with the completion of the new hall, the amount of sports activities is increasing.

Teachers note how well their pupils understand new work. They have a clear picture of how well pupils are progressing from day to day and they adapt their plans accordingly. At the whole-school level, arrangements to assess pupils' rate of progress and the level at which each one is working are satisfactory. The information gathered from assessments is used well to identify pupils who are not keeping up as they should and they are given extra help. There is scope to analyse assessment information more rigorously to reveal which aspects of teaching and the curriculum are most and least effective and thereby support the school's planning for improvement.

Taken overall, leadership and management are good and the school is poised to go from strength to strength. The new headteacher has made a good start and staff and parents are behind her. She has quickly gained a fair picture of the school's effectiveness and identified what it does well and what could be improved and she has good plans to tackle the weaker areas. That said, the school's self-evaluation, which was completed before she took over, presented an over-optimistic view of the school's effectiveness. The new headteacher recognises the potential to build on the successful teamwork that has underpinned school development and extend the teachers' leadership roles. She has identified the need to build success criteria into the school's annual improvement plan to aid evaluation of what improvement has been achieved. The staff are eager to continue developing their skills and make their contribution to school improvement. They are a cohesive, mutually supportive team with a shared sense of purpose. Governance is good. Governors are well informed about the school and involved in its life and work. They communicate well with parents, notably through their well presented and readable report, the 'Annual'.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children achieve well in the Foundation Stage (the Reception year). Most have attended Nursery before starting school. The majority make good progress in all areas of their learning in Reception. Generally, the children make the most gains in personal, social and emotional development. For several children the development of early reading and numeracy skills is not quite as rapid. This year's new starters have settled to school life quickly. They are proud of their achievements and pleased to see their work on display in the classroom. The Reception children are taught in a class with the Key Stage 1 pupils. The curriculum provided for them covers all the required areas of learning satisfactorily. Nonetheless, there is scope to provide more opportunities for these young children to learn through purposeful, planned play activities.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve pupils' progress in writing and mathematics.
- Develop the teachers' roles as leaders of the school's work in each subject.
- Sharpen the planning for school improvement; the systems for identifying the school's priorities; and the arrangements for checking the progress made.

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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?	2
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?	1
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

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?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	3
The behaviour of learners	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?	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.

Annex A

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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2
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	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

21 September 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Bassenthwaite Primary School, Cumbria, CA12 4QH

I expect you remember that I visited your school recently. I came to see how well all the children are learning. I enjoyed my day at your school, which has a lovely family feel. Everyone made me feel welcome. Thank you for talking to me about your work and what it's like being a pupil at your school. This letter is to tell you what I found out.

Bassenthwaite is a good school. You are taught well and you make good progress in your learning in all the classes. You do best at reading and science.

I was impressed by how responsible you are, how you all try your very best in lessons and how you play sensibly and look out for each other. Your excellent attitudes to learning help you to do well at school so I do hope that you will all carry on working hard.

The adults take very good care of you and help you to grow up well. Like you, they are proud of the new extension and excited about making the most of it. They are keen to make the school even better and they talked to me about how they might do so. I have asked them to focus on improving the following things:

- your progress in mathematics and writing
- how the teachers make sure that you do as well as you possibly can in all subjects
- having clear success criteria in their plans for improving the school, so they will know if they have achieved what they wanted to.

For you, the most important thing is to keep on working hard, make your contribution to school life, and care for each other. I'm sure you will have some good ideas to help improve your school further.

You all have my very best wishes for the future.

Yours sincerely

Pat Kime HMI