

Fairfield Infant School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	112131
Local Authority	Cumbria
Inspection number	310793
Inspection dates	28–29 November 2007
Reporting inspector	Sheila Mawer

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

Type of school	Infant
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	213
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Charlie Scales
Headteacher	Mrs Fran Dryden
Date of previous school inspection	1 February 2004
School address	Gallowbarrow Cockermouth Cumbria CA13 0DX
Telephone number	01900 325933
Fax number	01900 325934

Age group	3–7
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This average sized school is oversubscribed and draws pupils from beyond its immediate locality. Socio-economic conditions are comparatively advantageous and only a small proportion of pupils is entitled to free school meals. Most pupils are from White British backgrounds. A very small number of pupils speak a language other than English at home. These pupils are generally at an early stage of learning English. The percentage of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is well below average.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

The school provides an outstanding education for its pupils and gives excellent value for money. Parents agree when they say, 'If I could name a perfect school, it would be Fairfield Infants'. Outstanding leadership and management underpin pupils' excellent achievement and their exemplary personal development. The school is modest in evaluating its effectiveness because it strives constantly to improve further through rigorous monitoring and evaluation. The headteacher provides excellent leadership and is pivotal to the school's success. She has built a strong team of effective staff and governors, who are committed to high achievement and strive for excellence in all they do. Staff are encouraged to improve their expertise through training. As a result, they fulfil their additional responsibilities as subject leaders very well and keep up to date with the pace of national change. They also excel as outstanding teachers who have high expectations of pupils' abilities and encourage their independence as learners. Consequently, standards at the end of Year 2 have stayed significantly above average since the previous inspection.

Care, guidance and support are excellent and highly regarded by parents who overwhelmingly praise the school for keeping their children healthy and safe. The school constantly reaches out into the community to find innovative ways to enrich an already excellent curriculum. For example, pupils collaborated with a local school and businesses in the compilation of a 'Healthy Lunchbox' booklet for parents. One of the reasons for pupils' excellent academic achievement is their outstanding personal development. They love school and as one parent commented, 'Everyday my children bubble with enthusiasm on their way to school and come home happy.' Pupils' behaviour is excellent and they show great concern for others through their fund raising activities. The school council is growing in strength and stature and is currently working on sections of the school's web site. By the time they leave the school, pupils are armed with high level skills to help them to move on successfully in all that they do.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 1

The quality of provision in the Foundation Stage is excellent, although stronger in the Reception classes, where progress is exceptionally good. Some recent staffing changes in the Nursery are still being consolidated, but overall the Foundation Stage provides high quality care for children in a safe and secure environment. Planning is thorough and provides purposeful adult-led activities that engage the children as well as opportunities for them to plan their own learning and become more independent. The building has recently been extended which gives more space and opportunities for imaginative play. Within the school's limited playground facilities, a good outdoor area has been adapted to extend the different areas of learning. However, a few aspects of physical development are difficult to organise on the steep playground. Teaching is good in the Nursery and excellent in the Reception classes, where meticulous records are kept of children's progress and used to meet their diverse needs. The excellent support that children receive in the basic skills and in their personal and social development gives them the confidence to succeed in the next stage of their learning. The Foundation Stage leader is a model of good practice and her high expectations and support for colleagues is further strengthening the provision in the Nursery.

What the school should do to improve further

- The school does not have any significant areas for improvement that it is not already tackling.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

Achievement is excellent for all groups of pupils, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Children start school with standards that are typical for their age. In the Foundation Stage they make rapid progress so that by the time they enter Year 1, most pupils are working beyond the goals expected of five-year-olds. Standards at the end of Year 2 are significantly above average and progress is excellent. In 2006–2007 the standards were very high in all subjects and more able pupils performed particularly well. This year, the standards are not as high overall as they were in 2006–2007 because of a larger percentage of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Boys perform less well than girls in writing. However, the school has recently adopted a more structured approach to teaching letter sounds. This is helping the boys to improve their writing skills and slowly catch up with the girls. Standards in information and communication technology (ICT) and music are above average.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is outstanding. Relationships are excellent and pupils manage their feelings and emotions well. As a result, behaviour is exemplary. They work hard in lessons, cooperate well and demonstrate a mature, caring attitude towards one another. They listen carefully in class discussions and are confident when expressing views and opinions. Pupils' typically say 'school is fun' and their enjoyment is evident in all they do and in the above average attendance this year. They have a very good awareness of what constitutes a healthy lifestyle and thoroughly enjoy the 'huff and puff' exercises. They know how to stay safe, and feel confident that they have someone to go to if they are upset. Pupils have a very good sense of what is right and wrong and particularly value the work of the 'playground friends'. They typically comment that, 'We know how to behave and how to help and we give good advice.' They willingly accept responsibility and through the school council make a valuable contribution to the life of the school and the wider community. For example, they are currently assisting with a litter campaign in the community. Pupils are being well equipped for later life through excellent basic skills and high levels of competence in ICT.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 1

Pupils achieve exceptionally well because teaching is of a consistently high quality. Assessment information is used well to match work accurately to pupils' different learning needs and to plan challenging activities. Lessons are stimulating and enjoyable with many opportunities for practical activities. In the Reception class for example, staff used a sand pit to build a castle with the children in order to extend their speaking and listening skills after a lesson on nursery rhymes. A prominent feature of lessons is the very effective way that support staff are trained to accelerate the learning of small groups of pupils. They have been particularly successful in

contributing to the above average standards in ICT. The way pupils are managed and encouraged is of the highest calibre and consequently they give of their best and are highly motivated to learn. Pupils review their own progress at the end of lessons and teachers' marking provides very helpful guidance on what is done well and what to improve. Parents play an important role in extending their children's learning. They see that homework is completed and a large number of them help in the classroom with a range of different activities.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The outstanding curriculum motivates pupils and promotes enjoyment of learning. There is a very strong focus on extending literacy, numeracy and ICT skills across different subjects. This promotes the achievement of high standards by the end of Year 2. Teachers effectively modify the curriculum to take account of pupils' aptitudes so that all pupils, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, make equally strong progress. Personal, social, health and emotional development are very well promoted so that pupils get along with one another very well and have a good understanding of healthy living. A wide range of educational visits and visitors adds enrichment and enjoyment to learning. For example, very good use is made of parental skills and knowledge in developing pupils' understanding of different cultures. When children in Reception celebrated Shichi-go-san, the father of a Japanese pupil helped with the celebrations.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Care, guidance and support of pupils are outstanding. Procedures and arrangements for child protection, health and safety and risk assessment are secure and rigorous. Excellent relationships with adults contribute to a warm caring atmosphere. This gives pupils the confidence that teachers will sort out any problems. The school encourages pupils to accept personal responsibility, consider the feelings of others and to care for one another. The school carefully monitors the progress of pupils so that it is able to identify those who need additional help and support. Very good links with external agencies ensure that pupils receive appropriate help. Academic guidance is good. Staff know pupils well and through the 'I can do' books, pupils know what they need to do to improve their work.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

Leadership and management are outstanding. The exceedingly strong and stable leadership of the headteacher holds the key to the school's continuing success. She has built an effective team of key staff around her and strengthened their roles in monitoring and evaluating the quality of pupils' learning. This has ensured excellent improvements since the previous inspection, the continuation of high standards and rapid progress made. Challenging targets are also met. The views of parents, pupils, staff and governors are sought in preparing the carefully prioritised school development plan. The plan is used rigorously to evaluate the performance of the school and to assess its strengths and weaknesses. Governance is excellent. Governors know the school extremely well and play a significant part in shaping its development. Recently, they have overseen major alterations to the school and changes in staffing without any adverse effect on the pupils' learning. Already judged as a very good school at the previous

inspection, the school has gone from strength to strength and has an excellent capacity to continue to do so.

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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?	1
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	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	1
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2
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 extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	2
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?	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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	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

29 November 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Fairfield Infant School, Cumbria, CA13 0DX

Thank you all for the warm welcome that you gave Mr Goodchild and me when we visited your school. We thoroughly enjoyed our visit and we would like to share our findings with you. You told us that you love your school and there is nothing that you don't like. After two days with you we agree that you go to an outstanding school and do brilliantly in your work. When we watched your lessons in class we thought how lucky you are to have such great teachers and other adults in the school who care for you all so well. Your headteacher and governors are doing a great job in making the learning fun and your time in school so enjoyable. We were delighted with your excellent behaviour, how hard you work and the real care you show for others. We noticed the way you work independently in lessons and how the school council helps to run the school. We are pleased that you all feel healthy and safe in school and were very impressed with the lunch box booklet that you have helped to produce for your parents.

Thank you again for helping us with our work. I know you will all continue to work as hard as you do now and be such a credit to the school. Best wishes to you all for the future.

Yours sincerely

Sheila Mawer

Lead Inspector