

Belle Vue Infant School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	112228
Local Authority	Cumbria
Inspection number	310820
Inspection date	16 May 2008
Reporting inspector	Dave Byrne

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	4-7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	163
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Alison Evans
Headteacher	Mrs Catherine Taylor
Date of previous school inspection	1 February 2005
School address	Beaver Road Carlisle Cumbria CA2 7PT
Telephone number	01228 607554
Fax number	01228 607553

Age group	4-7
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector. The inspector evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues:

- the progress of pupils across the school and whether there are variations which affect the learning of some pupils
- the effectiveness of strategies to lift achievement and progress in writing, in particular that of boys
- the quality of the curriculum and its impact on teaching and learning.

Evidence was gathered from the school's own assessment data and other school documentation, observations of teaching and learning, the way that pupils interact with each other and their response to what is provided for them, parents' questionnaire returns and discussions with governors and staff. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail. The inspector found that almost all the judgements made in the school's self-evaluation form were justified and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

Description of the school

This is a popular school where numbers are increasing. The percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals is below average, as is the proportion with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Virtually all pupils are of White British origin with none requiring support for English with an additional language. The school has gained a Sports Activemark and Artsmark (Silver) and has Healthy Schools Status. The school is to be amalgamated with the nearby junior school in September 2008.

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. It provides the pupils with an excellent start to their education and sets them up very well for their future lives. The key strengths are in the outstanding quality of leadership and management provided by the headteacher and governors, the very high quality of teaching and the excellent curriculum which inspires pupils to learn with fun. Parents are a key part of the school's success. In their questionnaires all parents feel the school is doing a good job with the vast majority praising all that it does. They are particularly complementary about the very good quality of communication they receive and the approachability of staff.

At all times the school is a happy and fun place. Children constantly smile and laugh as they share in the excitement provided for them. Teachers are dedicated to making activities practical and relevant to the pupils' lives. After a recent visit to Carlisle Castle boys and girls in Year 2 were bursting to use their 'wow' words in their narrative writing. The enthusiasm for writing is a joy to behold and it is refreshing to see that many boys love writing as much as girls! Because pupils know what they need to do to improve, and are secure in the knowledge that their teachers will monitor their progress and offer praise and encouragement, they have the confidence to 'have a go'. As a result, standards in writing are rising rapidly and catching up on the good standards typically gained in reading. Over the last five years standards in reading, writing and mathematics have been above average, although writing was shown to be broadly average in 2007. Information from the inspection supports the view that recent improvements to the curriculum and the good use of assessment are leading to rising standards. Given that children start school with skills that are well below those typical for their age, these outcomes represent outstanding achievement.

The quality of teaching is excellent and results in pupils making rapid progress in lessons. Staff know each pupil very well and the objective information provided by regular assessment enables pupils to be given work that extends them and meets their needs and interests. The close partnership between teachers and teaching assistants means that pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities receive high quality support. The curriculum is excellent. It makes good links between subjects, so that pupils have a good understanding of the subjects they learn, and it is flexible enough to allow pupils' interests to be followed. This flexibility also motivates staff so that their natural interests and strengths can be exploited. The pupils therefore benefit from the inspiration of teachers who enjoy what they are doing. Learning is enhanced by an excellent range of lunchtime clubs which are very well attended by pupils. The clubs range from sport to writing to French.

The high levels of enjoyment are reflected in the pupils' outstanding spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, including their behaviour and attitudes. This is one reason why attendance is above average. The school is a safe and secure place for children and adults. The suitability of all adults in contact with pupils is rigorously checked and the safety of the buildings and playground carefully monitored. The school is not immune from occasions when individuals bring problems into school. Undesirable behaviour is very rare however because it is minimised by excellent procedures for encouraging good behaviour and the caring ethos that pervades the school. At all times pupils are thoughtful, polite and keen to help others. The role of lunchtime staff in developing amongst pupils positive attitudes to healthy eating typifies the strong team work between all adults in the school. Initiatives such as 'Fruity Fridays' and 'Tasty Tuesdays' have captured pupils' imaginations and successfully prompted excellent levels of

awareness of the importance of healthy eating. Regular 'Activate' sessions and the encouragement of playtime games encourage pupils to develop positive attitudes for exercise. Pupils are proud of the contributions that they make to school life. The school councillors talk with great animation about how they meet senior staff and discuss ways the school might be even better. Recently an impressive sum of money was raised for helping less fortunate children abroad through support for Book Aid.

The school's excellent provision is underpinned by the strong and caring leadership of the headteacher. She successfully combines the need to develop pupils' personal qualities with making sure they do as well as they can with their academic work. The school is supported by an extremely well informed and effective governing body which makes sure that the school is very efficiently run. A very strong and dynamic staff team has been created which is rapidly improving its management role. Assessment is at the heart of the school. It keeps everyone, including pupils, focused on what the next steps are in learning. School improvement planning is thorough and based on information gathered by staff and through consultations with pupils. The school has an excellent perspective of its own strengths and weaknesses and makes very good use of targets for its development. The school has improved since the last inspection and given the current circumstances it has an excellent capacity to continue to do so in future.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 1

Children have an excellent start to their education in the Reception class. It is a very caring and secure place. Although many start school with skills well below those typical for their age, by the time they go on to Year 1 most children reach the levels expected for their age and some exceed them. This excellent achievement is down to the outstanding quality of teaching and skilled leadership and management. The curriculum has been adapted in recent years. Learning involves children in making decisions for themselves. A rich and stimulating learning environment, both indoors and outdoors, makes school an attractive place to be. Opportunities to act on their imaginations during role play and time to paint, play in water, learn with sand and ride bikes outdoors, all capture pupils' interests. A balance between adult led tasks, for example in learning letters and sounds, coupled with imaginative fun activities very successfully builds up the children's learning. Assessment is used very well to identify children's individual needs. This enables staff to help those children who are at risk of falling behind or who are more able and need to be extended. Links with home are very good and every effort is made to encourage parents to get involved in their children's education.

What the school should do to improve further

- There are no areas for improvement other than those already identified in the school's own improvement plan.

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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	2
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

19 May 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Belle Vue Infant School, Cumbria, CA2 7PT

You told me that you liked your school and, judging by the smiles on your faces and the fun that you have in your lessons, you are quite right. In fact it is outstanding which means that it is better than most other schools in the country!

It is so good because of the way your teachers give you lots of exciting and practical things to do. They make learning very interesting! The trip to Carlisle Castle seemed to be great fun and certainly made most of you want to use the 'wow' words you found! You are all doing very well in reading, writing and mathematics and are very well prepared for moving on to Year 3.

Your behaviour is excellent at all times and you know how to treat others with care and respect. The pride you show in receiving the stickers for eating your fruit and vegetables shows how much you want to eat healthily. I was impressed too by the way you love exercise. Your school council is very strong and really gives you all a chance to explain to the adults what you think about the school.

Everyone I spoke with and all of the comments from your parents who returned their questionnaires show me how much you like learning. This is one reason why so few of you miss school. Your headteacher is amazing. She knows each of you well and takes great care to make sure that you all are safe, secure and well looked after. She not only wants you to be happy, but also to do as well as you can with your school work.

Your school is so good that there is nothing in particular that I have asked the school to do to get even better. There will be things though that will change, not least in September when your school becomes one bigger school. I wish you all lots of luck and send you all my best wishes for your future.

Kind regards

Dave Byrne

Lead inspector