

Boltons C of E School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	112245
Local Authority	Cumbria
Inspection number	310827
Inspection date	21 February 2008
Reporting inspector	John Heap

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	100
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Stephen Atkinson
Headteacher	Mrs Marjorie Robinson
Date of previous school inspection	1 June 2004
School address	Bolton Low Houses Wigton Cumbria CA7 8PA
Telephone number	01697 342217
Fax number	01697 349452

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector. The inspector evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues: standards in writing; the quality of the systems for monitoring pupils' progress, and their impact on teaching and standards; the effectiveness of leadership and management in evaluating the school's work and setting challenging achievement targets for pupils. The inspector gathered evidence from school documentation including self-evaluation and national published assessment data; interviews with pupils, parents, staff and governors; observations of lessons and other activities, and analyses of parents' questionnaires and comments. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated but the inspector 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.

Description of the school

This small primary school serves a mainly White British population in an area where social and economic conditions are better than average. No pupils claim free school meals. The proportion of pupils who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below average. A very small proportion of pupils are learning English as an additional language. The school provides extended day services, both before and after school.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

It is difficult to imagine a happier place for children than this good school. There is a great deal of genuine respect shown between all adults and children. Parents are effusive in their praise for school and the following remarks are typical: 'Very pleased with the school'; 'Very well run school'; 'My children have been happy, well cared for and eager to learn at this school.' There is nothing bland about this school, but much that inspires, motivates and supports.

Pupils' personal development, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is outstanding. There is a strong sense of community to which pupils contribute very well. The school council is active; charities are supported and 'mentors' and 'buddies' provide very good support for younger pupils. As one of the youngest pupils said, 'Everyone here is friendly and helpful.' Pupils thoroughly enjoy school because of the consistently good behaviour and excellent attitudes to work and school. This is also confirmed by the high attendance that is much better than at the time of the last inspection. Pupils are considerate to each other and guests, and have developed a very strong knowledge and understanding of what it takes to be safe and secure. They know that sensible eating and exercise are very important facets of a healthy lifestyle. They enjoy being energetic and the school has a Gold Award for sport. Pupils have a very good understanding of the diverse nature of British culture and the school's clear emphasis on ethnic music and art plays a big part in this.

Achievement is good because the teaching, curriculum and guidance are good. The pupils are very well prepared for future education and life. Standards are on an upward trend and are above average. In 2007, national test results in Year 6 were significantly above average. The school is well aware of its strengths, particularly in reading, mathematics and science. It is also clear that it wants to improve writing still further and the curriculum has been rightly modified to give pupils more time to write a long piece of text. Nevertheless, writing standards could be higher, particularly for the more able pupils in Year 2 and in the quality of presentation by older pupils. The needs of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, the gifted and talented and those at an early stage of learning English are clearly identified. This enables provision to be well tailored to their needs and helps them to make good progress.

Teaching is effective and consistent throughout the school. Good classroom management leads to very harmonious relationships and a good climate for learning. Lessons are interesting and often fun, as in the Year 6 information and communication technology (ICT) session where pupils effectively used their research skills to design questions for famous people. The pace of learning is good in lessons and bolstered by the effective use of homework. Specialists are deployed effectively to improve pupils' expertise in music and sport. For example, the rapid rate of progress in drumming was obvious during the whole-school assembly. Learning targets are set for pupils, but there are some inconsistencies in how the marking guides pupils towards the next one.

The good curriculum promotes personal development very well. Pupils say they thoroughly enjoy the very good range of out-of-school activities, the visits they make and the visitors to school. Pupils and parents praise the school's approach to giving pupils responsibility and the way that the school fosters knowledge and understanding of different cultures. Academic development is promoted well. There is a strong focus on improving basic literacy, speaking, numeracy and ICT skills. As a result, pupils are confident speakers, work quickly and accurately in mathematics and develop strong research skills. Moreover, experiences of confronting more

complex ideas extend the learning of the more able pupils and those who are gifted and talented. Such opportunities include theatre visits to study Shakespeare and developing instrumental skills playing the trumpet and violin.

Care, guidance and support are good. Procedures for safeguarding pupils and child protection meet national requirements. Staff know the pupils and their families well because the monitoring of attendance, behaviour and academic achievements is effective. Pupils' academic progress is tracked through a range of measures, such as effective teacher assessment and regular testing; this has led to rising standards.

The strengths in the outcomes for pupils and in the provision are not accidental. They have come about because the headteacher is an effective leader who has a very clear vision for the school. This vision is summed up in the school's aims for each pupil to be: '.... confident, mature, with the basic skills to enable them to be part of whichever community they decide to live in.' Self-evaluation is accurate and the school knows itself well. The school is better than it was at the time of the previous inspection and has a good capacity to improve further. Staff and governors are very supportive of this vision. Key staff are effective in their management roles. Governance is satisfactory and not better because governors are too reliant on management for the information they receive, rather than developing their own structures to monitor and evaluate the work of the school. Financial management is prudent and the school provides good value for money.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children get a good start in the Reception Year and make good progress. This is a big improvement on the satisfactory judgement in the previous inspection report. Children arrive with skills and abilities that are slightly below what is typical for this age particularly in communication, language and literacy, as well as personal, social and emotional development. By the time they enter Year 1, they reach the level expected for their age. Good teaching is characterised by a strong emphasis on developing basic skills and devising fun ways of learning. Currently, children are excited by the 'Dinosaur egg' in the classroom and cannot wait for it to hatch. Such activity fosters good speaking, some simple research and expression of ideas. Staff employ good questioning techniques to strengthen children's understanding. For example, children were asked to compare the numbers of windows in the houses they had made for the three little pigs. Opportunities for learning are good and the outdoor area is packed with challenging and interesting things to do, including mobile toys. The 'chariot' is a big favourite. Induction procedures are good and enable the youngsters to settle quickly into school routines.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards in writing, particularly for more able pupils in Key Stage 1.
- Ensure that marking consistently points pupils to their next learning target.

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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?	2
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	2
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	1
The behaviour of learners	2
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	2

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	2
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	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

22 February 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Boltons C of E School, Cumbria, CA7 8PA

I thoroughly enjoyed being in your good school this week and relished the opportunity to witness the happy and purposeful atmosphere. I am very grateful for your warm welcome, courtesy and the help you provided. Here are some of my main findings.

The good things I found in your school include:

- the improvements in attendance and in the teaching and learning in Reception
- the way you support each other in classes and outdoors
- the excellent personal development that prepares you well for the future, including very good behaviour, first-rate attitudes to work and the relationships you develop
- the good progress that you make, particularly in reading, mathematics and music
- the good teaching and the strong teamwork of all the adults that put your needs first
- the way that you all contribute to a safe and caring atmosphere in the school
- the very good and interesting range of activities that enrich your learning
- the good leadership and management, including the contribution of the school council.

To improve matters further, your teachers will make sure that your writing skills become even better, especially by the end of Year 2. They will also make even more use of the marking of your work to make sure that you are clear about what you need to do to improve further. You can be a great help in this by continuing to follow the advice you are given.

Good luck for the future and continue to look after each other.

Yours sincerely

John Heap

Lead inspector