

Beetham CofE Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	112313
Local Authority	Cumbria
Inspection number	310848
Inspection date	8 July 2008
Reporting inspector	Carole Cressey

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	33
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Valerie Cookson
Headteacher	Ms Wendy Nicholas
Date of previous school inspection	1 February 2005
School address	Stanley Street Beetham Milnthorpe Cumbria LA7 7AS
Telephone number	01539 562515
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

This very small school is situated in a rural area and about half the pupils travel from outside the village. The socio-economic circumstances of families vary greatly. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is below average. The proportion with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is above average. Most pupils are White British. At the time of the inspection there were no children attending the Foundation Stage.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a good school. It has outstanding features and is led and managed effectively. The headteacher's very effective leadership has ensured that the school has made very good improvement since the last inspection. Working with a strong and challenging governing body, leadership has worked relentlessly to ensure that pupils receive good teaching, an excellent curriculum, which is both exciting and very creative, and high levels of care and support. As a result, standards in all subjects have improved, progress has accelerated and pupils are achieving well.

Children enter Reception with skills which, although varying from year-to-year, are broadly typical for their ages. They make good progress throughout the school and achieve well. By the end of Year 6 pupils' standards in reading, writing and science are above average and all pupils, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities reach their challenging targets. Although standards in mathematics are not as high, pupils reached their targets but these were not as challenging as in other subjects. The school has put in place a range of strategies to improve standards in mathematics. These are already effective and standards are improving. However, the use of assessments to spot underachievement and set challenging targets to help pupils improve are not used as effectively in mathematics as they are in other subjects. Consequently, pupils do not achieve as well as they could.

Pupils' personal development is outstanding. They have an excellent understanding of their place in the local community and are learning to value their local heritage of art, music, dance and the responsibility that living in an area of outstanding beauty brings. Pupils show a very good understanding of how to stay healthy and keep themselves and others safe, especially in their close proximity to the Lake District National Park.

Behind the walls of this small school, the headteacher has led her team in creating a very exciting and creative teaching and learning environment. Working together with other partners, including local schools and businesses, leadership has ensured that pupils in this school enjoy a learning environment second to none.

Lessons hum with good humour, warm relaxed relationships and high expectations of behaviour and attitudes. The curriculum is innovative. It includes the opportunity to learn French, and has an appropriate emphasis on the basic skills of literacy, numeracy, information and communication technology (ICT) and science. This ensures these pupils are well equipped with the skills necessary to be successful adults. The care of pupils is second to none. Staff are exceptionally supportive of pupils who come to school with emotional or learning difficulties. This is greatly valued by the parents and carers of these pupils. A few minutes of quiet time before the start of school, to calm a child down and go through their day's targets, help to set them in a positive mood for the day and reassure them there is always someone available to help them manage their problems.

Leadership accurately judges the school's strengths and weaknesses and knows what needs to be done to ensure sustained improvement. The success of these actions is very evident and shows that the school has outstanding potential to make further improvements.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Although there were no children in the school during the inspection, a study of the school's documentation, its self-evaluation and a scrutiny of children's progress indicate that the provision is good. Nevertheless, whatever their starting points, children make good progress in the Foundation Stage and by the end of the Reception Class the majority reach the learning goals expected for their ages and abilities.

What the school should do to improve further

- Use assessment systems more rigorously in mathematics to track pupils' progress, plan the next steps in learning, ensure all pupils understand their targets and know how to improve their work.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils' achievement is good and standards are above average. Cohorts are usually very small and the widely differing profile of the year groups is reflected in the school's results of national tests and assessments. Good progress is maintained throughout the school. In Years 1 and 2, pupils are achieving well and are reaching or exceeding the targets set for them. Overall, standards in Year 6 are above average and are similar to the results of the 2007 national tests. Standards in reading, writing and science are especially high and are above those expected for pupils' ages. Although most pupils reach the expected levels in mathematics, the school recognises that there is room to improve standards further. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities receive very good support and, as a result, make very good progress towards their individual targets and often reach the expected levels for their ages.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Personal development, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. Pupils' friendliness, very good behaviour and pride in themselves and their school is shown as they eagerly demonstrate their many talents to visitors; for example, performing their traditional Westmorland clog dancing or showing off their latest national arts or Healthy School's award. Pupils are very regular attenders. They show considerable enthusiasm in their lessons and are always eager to share ideas, collaborate on a challenging task or show exceptional kindness and patience to those classmates who have learning difficulties. Pupils know how to stay safe. They enjoy healthy tuck shops and win national cooking competitions. They learn to become careful pedestrians because the school is on a very busy main road and strong swimmers because they live very close to water.

School councillors are very proud of the real improvements they have been able to make to the toilet facilities and are looking forward to having their own fund raising efforts matched by a generous and supportive governing body. Through experiencing dance, drama, literature, music, art and food of different cultures and traditions from around the world, pupils are learning to understand and respect people different from themselves. However, the school recognises that pupils should learn even more about the diversity of British society.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching is good. Relationships are excellent and pupils thrive because teachers provide them with tools to help them to become successful learners. Classrooms, corridors, shared areas and outdoor facilities create an exciting world for pupils to explore and learn in. Comfortable settees and colourful cushions entice pupils to pick up a book and snuggle down to a good read. Bright and colourful displays constantly remind pupils of what they need to do to be successful learners. ICT is used exceptionally well by teachers and pupils to add interest and pace to lessons. Teachers use ICT to explain new learning in an exciting way that involves all pupils, including those with learning difficulties. Pupils use a range of ICT resources very effectively to work independently on a project, such as producing very moving, high quality autobiographies or to use a special program to reinforce particular mathematical rules. Teaching assistants are highly skilled and work very effectively to ensure that pupils with learning difficulties achieve as well as they can and take full part in the lessons. Higher attainers are challenged through work which is well matched to their abilities. Exciting visits arranged by the local secondary school extend their thinking and help them reach the higher levels they are capable of.

Teachers use information from regular assessments and tests in subjects, such as reading and writing, especially well to pinpoint each pupil's progress and carefully identify the next steps in learning. However, assessment in mathematics is less effective in tracking progress, especially in relation to National Curriculum levels. As a result, staff are less precise in providing pupils with the next steps in their learning.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The outstanding curriculum is vibrant, varied and extremely well suited to the needs of pupils in a small rural community. It ensures that in no way are pupils disadvantaged by the size of the school. The programme for learning outdoors, both in the imaginative and very well equipped grounds and in the many well planned visits, provides pupils with the opportunity to develop a very positive attitude to challenge and adventure. An excellent programme of social and health education provides the pupils with the necessary tools to develop personal safety, care and healthy living. A wealth of opportunities is available for pupils to become creative individuals. Dance, music and drama feature high on the school's curriculum. Out of school clubs, visits and visitors to school abound, enriching pupils' learning and personal skills. The boys' concern that they had no male teachers was treated with immediate seriousness and arrangements have been made to ensure that whenever possible enrichment activities, such as gymnastics, are led by male specialists. There are also opportunities in school for pupils to develop skills that will be useful to them in later life, such as group work, giving presentations of their work to the class and using their ICT skills.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Care, guidance and support are good with outstanding features. Procedures for safeguarding pupils' welfare, health and safety are in line with statutory requirements. Support staff are very well informed about the precise needs of pupils with learning difficulties. They work very

effectively with outside agencies and partners to provide pupils with very high quality support. As a result, pupils make rapid progress towards their targets. The school's use of assessment data is developing well to track individual progress throughout the year in a range of subjects. However, the information is not used consistently in mathematics to track individual pupils' progress throughout the year to ensure they all make the progress they should. Targets are not sufficiently clear to enable pupils to know what they need to do to move onto the next steps in their learning.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management at all levels are good. The leadership of the headteacher is outstanding; as a result, the school has made very good improvement since the last inspection. Governors know their school well and provide good support and challenge. All the areas for improvement have been addressed with rigour and considerable success. The headteacher has productively created a strong, enthusiastic and very effective teaching team which contributes to the very caring and challenging ethos. The headteacher rightly recognises that children can only be effective learners if they are nurtured in an ordered, caring and supportive environment. Beetham School successfully provides this for all its children. Standards have risen, especially in reading and writing. This is because of effective monitoring of teaching and learning, leading by example and the introduction of an increasingly rigorous assessment system. The school knows that standards in mathematics are not yet as high as they could be but the strategies already implemented, such as placing more emphasis on problem solving and providing more training for teachers, are already accelerating progress and standards are rising. The overwhelming majority of parents think their school is well led and managed. Their confidence is very well placed.

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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	1

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	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?	2
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?	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	1
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2
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	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

10 July 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Beetham CofE Primary School, Cumbria, LA7 7AS

Thank you so much for being so friendly and welcoming when I inspected your school a short while ago. I really enjoyed talking to you, especially the school council.

I was so pleased to see how well behaved you are, how much you enjoy school, and how much you enjoy learning both indoors and outdoors, including when you visit all the very interesting places your teachers plan for you. I especially liked to see that you appreciate learning about your local heritage of art, music and dance. The clog dancing was excellent!

You know such a lot about other countries and their ways of life. I have asked that you are taught more about people in Britain who have traditions and religions that are different from yours.

You all seem to know the importance of eating sensible food and taking lots of exercise. Do keep that up because it is important to staying healthy and fit. You also know how to keep yourselves safe on the roads and near water. This is very important because you live so close to a busy main road and to so many lakes which can be very dangerous.

I could see by the work in your books and displays around the school that you are all working hard in your lessons and making good progress, especially in reading, writing and science. I know you are all getting much better at maths, particularly at solving problems, but you are not as good at maths as you are at other subjects. In order to help you all improve in maths, you need more help to know how well you are doing and what you need to do to improve your work further. So listen carefully and pay attention when your teachers talk to you, write comments in your books and give you new targets.

You go to a good school where your headteacher and teachers make lessons fun and help you learn such a lot. I hope you will continue to enjoy school as much as you do now and that it will help you to become happy and successful adults.

Best wishes

Carole Cressey

Lead inspector