

Lowther Endowed School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	112342
Local Authority	Cumbria
Inspection number	310859
Inspection dates	24–25 January 2008
Reporting inspector	David Earley

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	96
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Roger Gill
Headteacher	Mr Mike Pincombe
Date of previous school inspection	1 February 2005
School address	Hackthorpe Penrith Cumbria CA10 2HT
Telephone number	01931 712344
Fax number	01931 712704

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

This is a smaller than average school in rural Cumbria. The proportion of pupils who are eligible for free school meals is below average. Most pupils are of White British origin. There is an above average proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The school has received the Healthy Schools Award, the Activemark and FA Charter Mark.

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. A significant factor in its success is the strong leadership by the headteacher and the commitment shared by the whole school community to raise standards and improve provision.

Pupils' achievement is good. Children make good progress in the Foundation Stage and in Key Stage 1. By the end of Year 2, pupils reach average standards in reading, writing and mathematics; often they are above average. The average standards in 2007 represented good progress because there was a high proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities in this year group. Good progress is maintained in Key Stage 2 and, by the end of Year 6, standards in English, mathematics and science are significantly above average.

Personal development, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is good. Pupils enjoy coming to school and have an excellent understanding of how to lead healthy lifestyles. Behaviour is good. Pupils make a good contribution to the local and wider community and have lots of opportunities to take responsibility and show initiative. They are well prepared for the next stage in their education. Attendance is average.

Teaching and learning are good. Lessons are usually fun and briskly paced so that pupils are interested and sustain their concentration. Good use is made of assessment in order to provide challenging tasks and pupils have a good understanding of their learning and their targets for improvement. However, marking does not always clearly indicate what they need to do in order to improve. Teaching assistants provide good support, particularly for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities so that they make good progress.

The curriculum is good. There is a particularly wide range of visits, visitors and extra curricular activities which enrich the curriculum. There is a good focus on the basic skills of literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT). However, there are not enough opportunities for pupils to develop key skills, such as working with others and problem-solving, in all subjects. Teachers' planning is good and increasing links between the Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1 are enhancing transition arrangements and widening opportunities for younger pupils to engage in practical activities.

Care, guidance and support are good. This is a very caring school with a strong family atmosphere, where pupils and families are well known. Procedures to safeguard pupils and to ensure risk assessment and child protection are in place.

Assessment and tracking are good and lead to clear targets for improvement.

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher provides clear and purposeful leadership and staff and governors work well together. The school evaluates its performance well and this leads to realistic and well focused development planning. Subject leaders do not have enough opportunities to check teaching and learning in order to make improvements. Governance is good. Governors are supportive and play an important role in helping to shape the direction of the school.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Provision in the Foundation Stage is good. From average starting points, children usually reach standards above those expected for their age by the end of the Reception year. The quality of

teaching is good and the curriculum is stimulating so that children want to learn. The curriculum is shortly to be enhanced by further extensions to the outdoor provision. The school is developing closer links between the Reception class and Key Stage 1 in order to improve continuity of learning. Relationships are very good so that children settle in quickly. There is a happy and challenging atmosphere which encourages children to increase their confidence. However, there are some missed opportunities to extend independence when, for example, pupils are not always encouraged to ensure the return of the equipment they use. There are very good links with parents and outside agencies to support learning. Improved assessment and tracking are helping to raise standards.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the consistency of marking so that pupils know clearly what they need to do in order to improve.
- Develop further the role of subject coordinators.
- Provide more opportunities to develop key skills in all subjects and activities, such as problem-solving and working with others.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Achievement is good. Most pupils, whatever their ability or background, make good progress so that by the end of Year 6 standards are significantly above average.

Upon entry to the Reception class, children's attainment varies considerably year on year, but is generally typical for their age. They make good progress so that most usually exceed the goals set for their learning.

Standards in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of Year 2 in 2007 were broadly average. This represents good progress because there was a large proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and /or disabilities in this group. There is a similar proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities in the current Year 2. School data and inspection evidence indicate that they are making good progress and are on track to reach broadly average standards.

In Key Stage 2, the good rate of progress is maintained. The results of the national tests at the end of Year 6 in 2007 in English, science and mathematics were significantly above average, as they were in the previous year. School data and inspection evidence indicate that pupils in the current Year 6 are expected to reach above average standards.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Personal development, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is good. Pupils have an excellent understanding of how to lead healthy lifestyles. This is enhanced by the school's project on healthy meals and the many opportunities for sport and exercise. Attendance is satisfactory. The school is working to improve the attendance of a small group of pupils who do not attend regularly. Pupils say that they enjoy coming to school and feel safe and well cared for. Relationships are very good and so help pupils to grow in confidence and self-esteem, as well as to make good academic progress. Although a small minority of parents expressed concerns about behaviour, evidence gathered during the inspection indicates that behaviour is good. There is a wide range of successful strategies to support and encourage

good behaviour. The school council has a strong voice in the life of the school and reading partners, play leaders and monitors play an important role in helping others. There is a close focus on developing the skills of literacy, numeracy and ICT. Pupils collaborate well with each other and have opportunities to participate in enterprise schemes. They are well prepared for the next stage in their education. Pupils make a good contribution to the school and wider communities.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are good. Teachers make good use of assessment in order to present work which is suitably challenging for the different age groups in each class. Pupils have a good understanding of how well they are learning because teachers ensure that pupils know their learning objectives. In keeping with the school's motto that 'learning is fun', lessons are typically lively and interesting. In Year 1, pupils used pegs and computers to extend their understanding of number and in Year 4, English pupils increased their skills in the use of connectives when the teacher made very good use of humour. There are some good examples of marking but this is not consistent and there are occasions when pupils are not sure what they need to do in order to improve. The school makes good use of teaching assistants, particularly in support of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities so that they progress at the same rate as their peers.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is good. It is enriched by a very wide range of visits, visitors and popular extra-curricular activities. For example, when pupils visit Hadrian's Wall or work in school with poets, dancers and artists, their curiosity is aroused and understanding is deepened. A very good programme of personal, social and health education gives pupils an excellent understanding of how to lead healthy lifestyles. There is a good emphasis on teaching the basic skills of literacy and numeracy and ICT. The school is aware of the need to improve the curriculum further in order to develop, in all subjects, the use of key skills such as working with others and problem-solving. There are strong links with outside agencies, including local schools, which help to extend the curriculum. The curriculum for pupils in Key Stage 1 is becoming more responsive to their needs by improving links with the Foundation Stage.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Care, guidance and support are good. All pupils and families are well known to staff and there is a close family atmosphere which helps pupils to extend their personal development and become confident learners. One parent, speaking for many others, commented on how the caring, friendly team of staff 'help the children to develop great confidence and belief in their ability to achieve'. Relationships are very good and are enhanced by the good role models provided by staff. Pupils are confident to approach an adult should they have a problem. Child protection and risk assessment procedures and government recommendations for safeguarding children are in place. There is a good assessment and tracking system which helps teachers and

pupils to know clearly what they need to do in order to improve. Pupils have clear targets for improvement, particularly in English, which help them to focus their learning.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher provides very clear and committed leadership. He leads by example, through the quality of his own teaching and the caring ethos he helps to promote. Staff and governors share a clear vision for improvement and work well as a team. This leads to above average standards, good personal development and a caring and inclusive school community. Self-evaluation is thorough and is closely linked to a clear development plan. This is based on a realistic appraisal of the school's strengths and weaknesses. For example, an analysis of data and scrutiny of work led to improvements in aspects of writing and mathematics. Subject leaders have a good understanding of their subjects but have insufficient opportunities to check teaching and learning in order to make improvements. Most parents have very positive views of the school. One parent commented that, 'It honestly feels like the most stimulating of extended families.' Governance is good. Governors know the school well and take part in training in order to extend their skills. This enables them to be supportive and to hold the school to account for its performance. Issues from the previous inspection have been met and the budget is astutely managed in order to support improvements during a period of falling rolls. Strong leadership, clear evaluation and a shared determination to raise standards and improve provision give the school a good capacity to improve.

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

28 January 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Lowther Endowed School, Hackthorpe, Cumbria, CA10 2HT

Thank you for making me welcome when I came to visit your school. Yours is a good school. I really enjoyed talking to you because you were very friendly and helpful. I was very impressed to find out how much you know about keeping fit and healthy and that you enjoy coming to school. I think that the school council, reading partners, play leaders and monitors do a good job in helping to make the school a better place and by helping each other.

These are some of the things your school does well.

- You work hard and make good progress, because your teachers are good and make lessons interesting.
- You go on lots of visits, have interesting visitors and after-school clubs to help you with your learning.
- The school keeps a good check on how well you are doing.
- The school is a warm and friendly place and you are well cared for.

Here are some of the things that the school could do to become even better.

- You should have more opportunities to work together and to solve problems in all the different subjects.
- Better marking of your work would show you more how to improve.
- Teachers will make more checks on how well you are doing in the different subjects.

Thank you again for making me so welcome and I must say how much I enjoyed the healthy lunches.

Yours sincerely

David Earley

Lead inspector