

Beckermat CofE School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	112345
Local Authority	Cumbria
Inspection number	310861
Inspection dates	13–14 November 2007
Reporting inspector	George Crowther

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	91
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Alan Shepherd
Headteacher	Mrs Terri Eyre
Date of previous school inspection	1 March 2004
School address	Mill Lane Beckermat Cumbria CA21 2YD
Telephone number	01946 841221
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Age group	4–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

This is a smaller than average village primary school that draws pupils from a wide rural area, with just less than half living outside its usual catchment. The school's social context is relatively advantaged and only a few pupils are eligible for free school meals. Children's skills when they start school have risen recently, but are still broadly typical of what is expected, and vary with each small year group. The proportion with learning difficulties is below average. All the pupils are from White British backgrounds and none is at the early stage of learning English. The school has achieved an Investors in People award, and a local authority award for good practice in 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

Beckermat CofE School is a good school where pupils enjoy their learning and achieve well. One pupil summed up the views of many when he said, 'We could add to all the good things at our school but we wouldn't want to change anything.' This is because the staff have created a very positive and secure environment for learning where the pupils feel valued and respected. The great majority of parents think the school is doing a good job. Based on these positive attributes, pupils make good progress across the school. By Year 6, this leads to above average academic standards and pupils who are happy, confident and articulate.

Pupils achieve well by Year 6, but their progress across the school is uneven. They get a good start in Reception and Year 1 where good teaching and well-planned, interesting activities help them to succeed in all aspects of their learning. From Year 2 to Year 4, pupils make satisfactory progress, but the lessons are not always challenging enough. Pupils achieve well in Years 5 and 6 because good teaching encourages them to do the very best they can. Across the school, the quality of teaching is good but, in some lessons, learning does not always have the pace and challenge to enable all pupils to progress as quickly as they could.

Pupils' personal development is outstanding. They thoroughly enjoy all aspects of school life, particularly the wide range of interesting activities out of lessons. Their behaviour is impeccable. The pupils know a lot about being healthy, and they feel safe and cared for. They make a significant contribution to the school community, not least through expressing their views confidently. High levels of personal skills and good academic standards prepare pupils well for the future. A good curriculum promotes pupils' enjoyment well through lessons and a rich range of clubs, visits and visitors. Pupils' success at school is encouraged by good levels of care, guidance and support but there is some inconsistency in the use of targets to improve achievement.

Good leadership and management are sharply focused on improving pupils' achievement. The headteacher promotes a very clear view of what the school is aiming for and leads from the front in the good quality of her teaching. Although action has been taken to develop aspects of teaching and learning, weaknesses remain in some areas. Nonetheless, leaders have an accurate view of the school's effectiveness, which provides a good platform for further improvements. The school provides good value for money.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children achieve well in Reception because the quality of teaching is good and a stimulating range of activities makes them enthusiastic learners. Close links with the local nursery, and a good induction programme help both children and parents settle quickly. The organisation of learning develops children's personal skills well. For example, the teacher encourages the children to make choices, boosting their independence effectively. Because activities are interesting, the children show good levels of concentration. They also receive lots of support from the adults, who extend children's learning effectively. The school's data and observations of lessons show that pupils make good progress; the current children are well on track to reach, and some exceed, the learning goals expected at the end of the Foundation Stage.

What the school should do to improve further

- Increase the proportion of lessons where the pace of learning and the level of challenge enable pupils to make good progress, particularly in Years 2 to 4.
- Ensure consistency across the school in the use of learning targets to improve pupils' achievement.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Children start school with standards that are broadly typical for their age and, by Year 6, achieve well to reach above average standards. Children get a good start in the Reception year. Lively teaching, with a good variety of challenging activities helps them to learn quickly. By the time they join Year 1, standards are better than expected, particularly in language skills. Pupils continue to make good progress in Year 1, responding to good teaching and building their basic skills well. In Year 2, however, progress slows because the work is not always challenging enough. Nonetheless, results of national tests at the end of Year 2 have been significantly above average, as are current standards. In 2007, the national measures of pupils' progress in Years 3 to 6 were average, and below average in English, but they do not take into account significant mobility within this group. The school's own data show that the achievement of pupils who were at the school throughout Years 3 to 6 was at least satisfactory, with good progress in Years 5 and 6. Their standards were above average. Observations of lessons show that standards are similar in the current Year 6. The school identifies carefully the needs of the small proportion of pupils who have learning difficulties and provides appropriately challenging work so they can make good progress.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

The pupils thoroughly enjoy school and talk enthusiastically about the wide variety of activities on offer. By Year 6, they display very mature and positive attitudes to learning. A typical comment was, 'The teachers make us work hard but they give us fun things to do'. Pupils are keen to contribute in lessons and they work hard, even when the tasks are not as challenging as they could be. They are friendly, polite and exceptionally well behaved. Relationships are excellent. 'Everyone knows each other at our school and we all look after each other.' The older pupils relish being play leaders so they can look after the younger ones. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. The day-to-day life of the school, a rich and varied curriculum and valuable links with the local church give pupils a strong understanding of themselves and their place in the wider world. The pupils have a clear appreciation of their own well-being. They know that a balanced diet and exercise are important for good health. They feel safe in school and know how to stay safe out of school. Pupils make an excellent contribution to the school community through many extra responsibilities and the articulate way in which they express their views.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The quality of teaching and learning is good overall, but it varies between classes. It is good for children in Reception and Year 1, and for pupils in Years 5 and 6, but satisfactory elsewhere. Throughout the school, teachers' good relationships with their pupils help them to organise and manage learning successfully. Lessons are generally well planned. Whole-class sessions are effective in explaining new work and most lessons have a good variety of methods to help pupils learn. The good teaching helps pupils to learn quickly because lessons move at a brisk pace and the work is challenging. As a result, teachers capitalise on the pupils' excellent attitudes to learning, insisting they work hard and getting the best out of them. Where teaching is satisfactory, the pace of learning and the tasks pupils are given do not make enough demands on them. As a result, pupils do not always make as much progress as they could. Teachers use informal assessment to keep track of pupils' progress, but this information is not always used to provide suitably challenging work. Whole-school systems to check on pupils' progress are effective in identifying those who could be doing better. Assessment is used well to identify groups of pupils for extra, targeted support.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum provides a wide range of experiences that largely meets pupils' needs well. For example, most classes have more than one age group and teachers adapt the curriculum successfully to ensure pupils have an appropriate diet of work. Activities are tailored carefully to meet the needs of pupils who have learning difficulties. The curriculum for English and mathematics helps pupils to make good progress across the school. Skills in information and communication technology (ICT) are developed well through work in other subjects, such as when Year 6 pupils used computer presentations to share research about the Vikings. Pupils' outstanding personal development owes much to a strong programme of personal, social and health education. An exceptional range of activities outside lessons is much enjoyed by the pupils and helps them to learn new skills. Clubs, educational visits and a residential experience for all pupils from Year 2 enrich the curriculum significantly. For example, Year 6 thoroughly enjoyed three days backpacking in the Lake District.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Levels of pastoral care are outstanding and academic guidance and support are good. Very positive relationships between staff, pupils and parents ensure that each child is happy and ready to learn. Pupils say they feel safe because the staff know them well and look after them. The school's procedures for child protection are in place and arrangements to keep pupils safe follow national guidelines. The school is conscientious in assessing risks both at school and when pupils are out on activities. The school responds effectively to any parental concerns about their children's well-being. The school sets learning targets for pupils to improve their work but there is inconsistency between classes in their use and effectiveness. Parents are well informed about what their children are learning and there are good links with outside agencies to ensure that every pupil makes good progress.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Good leadership and management show a strong determination to improve the quality of education for the pupils. For example, the curriculum is continually being enriched with a growing variety of activities that enhance the pupils' enjoyment of learning. The headteacher's strong leadership is based on the importance of pupils achieving their potential within an environment where learning is enjoyable. She provides a clear direction for the development of the school. The whole of the teaching staff is involved in leading and managing various aspects of the school's work and they carry out these responsibilities diligently. Leaders have a good understanding of how pupils' learning can improve further, based on an honest and accurate evaluation of the school's performance. In some areas, action has led to marked improvement. For example, a joint project with other schools improved pupils' mathematical problem-solving significantly. In other areas, however, such as the drive to raise the quality of teaching and learning, there has been too little improvement since the last inspection. The school has suitably challenging targets for pupils' achievement. Teachers also use targets to support pupils' progress, but this is inconsistent across the school. Governors are an effective team who bring a wide range of skills to support the school's work. They have a good grasp of the school's strengths and weaknesses, and are not afraid to ask challenging questions about the school's performance. The strengths in leadership and management put the school in a good position to improve further.

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	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	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

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

15 November 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Beckermest CofE School, Cumbria, CA21 2YD

Thank you for being so friendly and helpful when I visited your school to find out how well you are doing. There are lots of good things about your school, but I also found a few ways in which it could be even better.

Everyone at your school seems to find learning enjoyable. When I visited lessons, or when I chatted with you around the school, you all said that it is a fun place to be and that there are lots of interesting things to do. You are polite, friendly and exceptionally well behaved. A great strength is that you are very confident to express your views. You all get on very well together, no matter what class you are in. From visiting some of your lessons and looking at your work, it is clear you are making good progress across the school, but you make quicker progress in some classes than in others. In Year 6, you reach standards that are better than expected. Overall, your school is doing a good job in helping you to learn quickly, but the work you are given in some lessons is not challenging enough. You say there are lots of interesting things to do in school, and I agree. You have visitors who do interesting activities, such as the dance teacher who came during my visit, and you go out of school to interesting places, such as the Year 6 trip to York. The jobs you do around school help you to make a good contribution to your community. All the staff look after you exceptionally well and make sure you are happy and ready to learn. Your headteacher is doing a good job in helping your school to get better and the staff are working hard to help her.

I have asked the school to do two things to improve your education further:

- make sure that all lessons move at a good pace and that the work is challenging particularly for those of you in Years 2 to 4
- set better targets that will help you all learn more quickly.

I am sure you will play your part by responding well to any new challenges. Thank you for helping me with the inspection of your school.

Yours sincerely

George Crowther

Lead Inspector