

# Dearham Primary School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	112413
<b>Local Authority</b>	Cumbria
<b>Inspection number</b>	310884
<b>Inspection dates</b>	22–23 January 2008
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Steve Isherwood HMI

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Foundation
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School	185
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mrs Julie Routledge
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs Michele Coates
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	1 January 2005
<b>School address</b>	Dearham Maryport Cumbria CA15 7HR
<b>Telephone number</b>	01900 812518
<b>Fax number</b>	01900 812518

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and one Additional Inspector.

## Description of the school

This is a smaller than average sized school, situated in the village of Dearham close to the town of Maryport in Cumbria. The area served by the school is of mixed housing and is socially and economically similar to the national picture. Pupils are drawn from a wide range of social backgrounds. A number of families live outside the immediate locality. The vast majority of pupils are White British, with a small number from minority ethnic groups. The proportion of pupils who are eligible for free school meals is below average, as is the number of pupils identified as having learning difficulties and/or disabilities. When children start school, their attainment is generally below that which is typical for their age.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 2

Dearham is a good school. The headteacher, governors and staff promote outstanding personal development and well-being amongst pupils, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. As a result, pupils behave very well, are caring and considerate to others and have positive attitudes to learning. This is a school with a strong family feel and a very caring ethos. The pupils enjoy coming to school and make good progress in their work. Parents are overwhelmingly supportive. One parent expressed the views of many when she said, 'The school is a wonderful environment for any child to grow up in.' Others commented that, 'The school is a positive place to be where pupils are encouraged to grow in confidence and self-esteem.'

The school has a good reputation within the community and has developed outstanding partnerships with other schools and agencies. Pupils speak highly of their teachers and have a good understanding of how to keep fit and healthy. They claim with justification that they are very well cared for and feel safe. Older pupils take good care of younger ones and, through the school council, they make a positive contribution to the community and school life.

Children achieve well from the moment they start school to reach above average standards at the end of Year 2. This is because of the good provision in the Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1, where the teaching is strong and activities are well chosen. Progress is good in Key Stage 2 and pupils achieve well, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. By the time they leave in Year 6, the pupils' standards are well above average in all core subjects at the expected Level 4 and at the higher Level 5. A significant factor in this good achievement is that teaching is good overall. Pupils learn well in lessons that challenge and spur them to make good progress. In the best lessons pupils take responsibility, tasks are engaging and skilful questioning develops the learning well. Where teaching is less strong, the range of teaching styles is too narrow. This means that pupils are not always provided with opportunities to test and deepen their understanding by directing their own learning, sharing their ideas with others or by using and applying their knowledge in different situations.

The school provides a good curriculum which contributes well to pupils' enjoyment and achievement. It is carefully planned, with a strong emphasis on the development of key skills in literacy and numeracy. The teaching of these subjects is made more meaningful to pupils through a good range of topics and themes, enriched by an excellent programme of visits and visitors. These activities contribute significantly to pupils' enthusiasm for learning and increase their personal autonomy. Following trips to France and London, as well as visits to different places of worship, pupils speak warmly of their experiences and value the opportunities they have to learn outside the classroom. Parents are hugely in favour of this approach. One parent's view reflected many, 'The residential visit made our son a much more confident and independent young person.'

Leadership and management are good. The school has made good progress since its inspection in 2005. The headteacher, staff and governors work as a team and know their school well. For example, they have correctly identified that teaching could be enhanced if some teachers had the confidence to take greater risks and provide a wider range of stimulating activities in lessons. They also recognise that systems to check on the quality of teaching and learning by senior leaders lack rigour. The school has good capacity to be even better because of the good support from governors and the strong commitment that exists within the school to keep the focus on raising achievement further and maintaining high levels of personal development for pupils.

## Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

### Grade: 2

Good provision enables children to achieve well in the Foundation Stage. Children enter Nursery with skills that are below those typical for their age. Within a short period they settle into a well structured learning environment. Parents appreciate the smooth transition to school and the high quality of care their children receive. Children make good progress in the Nursery and Reception Years and most reach, and sometimes exceed, the goals expected of them by the start of Year 1. Progress in personal development is excellent, from a low starting point. Purposeful activities engage the children well, and supportive relationships give them the confidence to initiate activities themselves. In structured play, adults are skilled at extending the children's learning through timely interventions and effective questioning. During water play for example, the teacher used toy ducks to consolidate an understanding of numbers to ten. In the current organisation the children in the Reception Year have less opportunity for imaginative play during the morning sessions than other children. This is being addressed through alterations to the accommodation. The provision for outdoor learning is satisfactory. Progress is promoted well in children's physical development. The coordinator provides good leadership and management, and gives clear guidance and help to colleagues. This creates strong and purposeful teamwork, good teaching and high expectations for the children in their learning.

### What the school should do to improve further

- Develop greater consistency in the range of teaching styles to stimulate pupils' greater involvement in learning.
- Establish rigorous checks on the quality of teaching and learning.

## Achievement and standards

### Grade: 2

Pupils' current work, as well as the test results from 2007, shows standards are above average and pupils' achievement is good.

When children start school, many have skills which are below what is typical for their age, particularly in language, communication and in their personal development. The strong provision in the Foundation Stage ensures that children settle quickly and achieve well. Pupils continue to make good progress in Years 1 and 2, where provision is also good. In 2007, standards at the end of Year 2 in writing and mathematics were above the national average and broadly average in reading. Although average numbers of the more able pupils achieved the higher level in mathematics, fewer did so in reading and writing. This was because the pupils' abilities were less strong than in previous years.

Work in lessons and in pupils' books show that pupils, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, make good progress as they move through the school to Year 6. Standards in all core subjects at the end of Key Stage 2 are significantly above the national average, as reflected in the latest test results for 2007. A notable success was that all the girls in Year 6 attained at least Level 4, the standard expected for their age, in English and mathematics and all of the boys did so in science. In addition, the proportion of pupils achieving the higher Level 5 in all subjects was 64%, which is well above average.

## Personal development and well-being

### Grade: 1

Pupils' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is outstanding and contributes significantly to the good progress they make. Pupils have excellent attitudes to learning, behave very well and are caring and considerate towards each other. For example, older pupils take good care of younger ones at playtimes and seek out pupils who have no-one to play with by involving them in games and activities. Pupils always try their best and are keen to succeed. Their good attendance testifies to their enjoyment of school.

The school has an exceptionally strong ethos, in which all pupils are encouraged to grow in confidence and self-esteem. This means that pupils feel safe and secure; achievements are shared and relationships are highly productive. Pupils are very clear as to what constitutes bullying; incidents are rare and swiftly resolved. The school pays careful attention to the emotional needs of all pupils through an extensive programme of personal, social and health education. For example, pupils in a Year 5 lesson developed high levels of respect and tolerance for others by discussing how easy it is to offend people with insensitive remarks. Pupils also have the opportunity to express their feelings and anxieties through the use of a 'worry box', where they can say what is on their mind. Consequently, pupils are confident to approach any member of staff for help if required and recognise that they have responsibilities towards other pupils and the adults in the school.

Pupils play a role in decision making through the school council, which means that they develop a strong social conscience and contribute significantly to school life. It was their idea to encourage high standards of conduct at lunchtime with the introduction of a trophy for the best behaved table. As a group, they report regularly to senior teachers on behavioural issues and show a good awareness of democratic citizenship through the election of school and class councillors.

Pupils have a good understanding of the importance of a healthy lifestyle and participate eagerly in an extensive range of sport and physical activities, including cross-country running and opportunities to walk to school. Pupils recognise the needs of others who are less fortunate through their regular charitable donations. They also provide entertainment and inspiration for local people through excellent links with the local community and performances.

## Quality of provision

### Teaching and learning

#### Grade: 2

Teaching is good throughout the school. Lessons are characterised by thorough planning and proceed at a brisk pace. Assessment information is increasingly used well to deliver challenging work that meets the needs of different ability groups. Explanations are clear and often enriched with up-to-date technology to keep pupils motivated. Probing questions help pupils to think hard while teachers check pupils' levels of understanding. High expectations of behaviour and very good relationships create a successful climate for learning. Teachers are skilled at making connections between subjects to make learning relevant. For example, pupils in a Year 2 literacy lesson used historical events from the Great Fire of London to improve their skills in writing non-fiction texts. Teaching assistants are used well to support small groups of learners who need help to consolidate their learning or to understand new work.

In some classes, pupils are not encouraged enough to be fully engaged in their learning, particularly in mathematics. Lessons are sometimes over-directed and there is too much reliance on the use of a published scheme of work. In these situations the opportunities for pupils to share ideas with a partner, engage in discussions or try their own ideas for solving problems is limited. Marking is inconsistent through the school. The best examples are from teachers who have a good understanding of how children learn effectively. They make sure that marking shows their pupils how well they are doing and how to improve.

## **Curriculum and other activities**

### **Grade: 2**

The curriculum is good with outstanding features in enrichment. There is a successful programme to promote personal, social, health and emotional development. This is a key factor in pupils' exemplary behaviour, their positive attitudes and their good awareness of how to keep healthy and safe. Pupils eagerly participate in at least two hours of physical education a week. In addition, a wealth of sporting activities are held after school, often in partnership with neighbouring schools. Science, technology and art clubs provide additional opportunities for pupils to develop their talents. Good links are made across subjects through a themed approach, which ensures that pupils are well motivated and show high levels of interest in the activities. Provision in the basic skills is strong and the development of these skills in other areas of learning aids pupils' progress. At times, more opportunities are needed for pupils to use and apply their knowledge of science and mathematics in real life situations. The needs of all groups of pupils are met well, including the more able and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 2**

The care, guidance and support for pupils are good. Outstanding levels of care for all pupils are rooted in the very good relationships between staff and pupils. These contribute strongly to pupils' excellent personal development and the good progress they make. Parents and pupils overwhelmingly agree that the school is a safe, happy and friendly place in which to learn. Parents also appreciate the close partnership established with school to support their children's learning at home. Reading diaries in particular, are used well to check on the progress pupils are making in their reading at home and in school. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are well supported and external agencies are effectively used to enhance this provision. All the procedures related to pupils' health, safety and well-being meet government requirements. The school makes sure that risk assessments for the many trips that pupils make are rigorously carried out.

Systems for monitoring pupils' academic progress benefit from the outcomes of regular assessment. Teachers are aware of individual needs; they are able to identify pupils who are not making sufficient progress and take appropriate action. The introduction of targets in reading and writing has given the pupils a focus but teachers do not always refer to them well enough in lessons or when they mark the pupils' work.

## Leadership and management

### Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good. The high standards identified at the time of last inspection have been maintained and improved. This is because the headteacher is steering the school in the right direction and benefits from the effective support and leadership of senior staff and governors in their various areas of responsibility. She possesses a clear vision, sets high standards and is passionate about ensuring that all pupils at Dearham achieve their potential. She is responsible for the warm, caring environment that prevails, where every child is included in what is offered and known as an individual. In all aspects of their work, staff work well together, put pupils first and are committed to see the school improve further. There is clear agreement on the strengths of the school and where further improvements are required. Good plans to push the school forward benefit from wide consultation with governors, staff and pupils.

The school is not complacent. It knows the aspects of pupils' work that need to be even better. For example, senior leaders have correctly identified that some teachers could broaden their range of teaching styles to enable pupils to be more involved in their learning. They are also aware that systems to promote and share good practice in learning lack clarity and that senior managers do not check on teaching and learning sufficiently rigorously.

The governing body plays a key role in shaping the school's direction and in holding it to account. Its members are very committed, discharge their duties well and are involved in evaluating the school's performance and planning for improvement. As a consequence and along with its other strengths, the school has good potential to improve further.



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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	2

### Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards <sup>1</sup> 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	1
How well learners enjoy their education	2
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

<sup>1</sup> 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**

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	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**

24 January 2008

Dear Pupils,

Inspection of Dearham Primary School, Maryport, Cumbria, CA15 7HR

Thank you all very much for the friendly way in which you helped Mrs Mawer and me when we visited your school recently. We came to the school to find out how well you are learning. You made it easy for us to collect this information by the very polite way you talked to us in lessons and through the interview with the school council.

You go to a good school that has many strengths. In particular, you all receive outstanding levels of care and support through the excellent relationships you have with your teachers and all other adults in the school. This makes the school a very special place in keeping you happy, safe and healthy. We were delighted with your excellent behaviour and how kind you were in helping one another in class. We saw a lot of you enjoying being monitors at playtimes and helping younger pupils in the playground.

All children in the Nursery and Reception classes get off to a good start and do well in their learning. All through the rest of the school you are working well and making good progress. This is because the teaching is good and you are keen to learn. We know how well you enjoy lessons when the big computer boards are used, as it makes it easier for you to understand the new learning that is explained to you. You spoke very warmly of the different visits you go on and the special things you have seen that add to your great enjoyment for school outside of the classroom.

Mrs Coates and the staff run your school well and we are sure that it will continue to improve. To help with this, we have asked them to ensure that more of your lessons include opportunities for you to learn in different ways and that your teachers look more closely at how well you are learning. We are sure that you will help them by telling them what makes lessons interesting and what helps you to learn.

We wish you well for the future.

Yours sincerely

Steve Isherwood

Her Majesty's Inspector