

Allonby Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	112100
Local Authority	Cumbria
Inspection number	325528
Inspection date	22 October 2008
Reporting inspector	Steve Isherwood HMI

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

The registered childcare, managed by the governing body, was inspected under section 49 of the Childcare Act 2006.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	27
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	0
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	0
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr M Holyoake
Headteacher	Mrs G M Martin
Date of previous school inspection	1 September 2005
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Allonby Maryport Cumbria CA15 6QG
Telephone number	01900 881324
Fax number	01900 881324

Age group	4–11
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Introduction

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

Description of the school

This is a smaller than averaged sized school situated in the village of Allonby on the Cumbrian coast. The area served by the school is rural and isolated. Children are drawn from a wide range of social backgrounds and all are of White British heritage. A number of families live outside the immediate locality and approximately one third of pupils have transferred from neighbouring schools. A higher proportion of pupils than normal are entitled to a free school meal and a higher than average percentage has a learning difficulty and/or disability. The school has gained several awards including the Healthy Schools Standard and the Physical Education (PE) Activemark.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Allonby Primary is a good school with some outstanding features. It is an integral part of the local community and takes exceptionally good care of every child. There are excellent links with parents and outside agencies which ensure that pupils are given every opportunity to succeed in a warm and caring environment. This is a school with a strong family feel and a positive ethos which owes much to the dedication and commitment of the school community to the welfare and personal development of all pupils, whatever their abilities or circumstances. As a result, pupils love their school, feel very safe and get on well with each other. Mutual respect abounds and older pupils are delighted to support younger ones. When asked to identify the best things about the school pupils emphasised that everyone gets on well with each other, there are plenty of things to do in their spare time and adults are always there to support and help them. Their enthusiasm is only dampened slightly when they talk about wanting more opportunities to do less listening and more doing in some lessons.

Being a very small school, teachers know the pupils and their families very well. This means that staff are highly tuned to the needs of every child and are extremely caring and vigilant in their response to each individual. Parents wholeheartedly agree and quite rightly hold the school in high regard. One parent's view was typical of many: 'Allonby is a very caring and safe school with a lovely atmosphere. Our children look forward to going every day'.

The school's promotion of community cohesion is good. Pupils' awareness of the diversity of British society and racial equalities has improved. This is sensitively delivered across the good curriculum in ways that are meaningful through special themes and studies of different religions.

Pupils, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress from the moment they enter the school. Standards, by the time they leave in Year 6, despite a tendency to fluctuate because of small numbers are generally above average in all core subjects. This represents good achievement considering the pupils' starting points. Nevertheless, the school is aware that the progress pupils make in writing is not as rapid as it is in reading. This is because some of the more able pupils do not always make sufficient gains in their work to reach the higher levels. The school has responded well and its actions are beginning to make a difference. However, senior leaders are correct in identifying that despite the recent improvements in this area, further work is still required.

Teaching is good overall. Pupils learn well in lessons that challenge and spur them to make good progress. Where teaching is strongest, relationships are very strong and the management of a wide age and ability range is successfully delivered through the effective work of skilled teaching assistants and additional helpers. Teachers question pupils effectively and the use of success criteria in teachers planning is improving pupils' understanding of the aims of the lesson. Where teaching is less successful, pupils' work is sometimes over-directed and opportunities for pupils to take responsibility and direct their own learning are not always taken.

The school is driven forward by good leadership and management. Leaders and managers including governors share the same vision for how the school should move forward. Considering the advances made since its last inspection and along with its other strengths, the school is well placed to improve further.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

The EYFS is delivered in a joint Reception, Year 1 and Year 2 class. The good provision gives children a good start and ensures that they settle quickly. When children enter the school their skills and levels of learning vary considerably but overall are typical for their age. Aspects of their communication, language and literacy skills are sometimes weak. As a result of a warm, caring environment, an effective curriculum and good teaching and learning, children make good progress and achieve well. Since the previous inspection, significant improvements to practices and resources have been made. As a result, the activities on offer now match the learning needs of children more closely and are well targeted on their stages of development. For example, in one session children made good progress in their understanding of numbers by counting letters in the water tray and by making patterns with paints. Elsewhere, children had the opportunity to make numbers in play dough and build their own sandcastles. In contrast, one child, using a computer programme, was challenged in his thinking by counting the number of spots on different sized ladybirds.

Staff work effectively as a team and continually assess how well children are achieving to plan further activities. The EYFS is led well. Parents are kept well informed and are encouraged to become actively involved in their children's learning.

What the school should do to improve further

- Accelerate pupils' progress further and increase the challenge for the more able pupils in writing.
- Provide increased opportunities for pupils to take more responsibility for their own learning.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Standards fluctuate year-on-year because of the very small numbers of pupils, the different composition of each year group and the movement of pupils in and out of the school. Nevertheless, pupils' current work, as well as recent tests results shows that standards are above average and pupils' achievement is good.

Although children start school with a wide range of abilities that vary considerably from year to year, most enter the Foundation Stage with skills that are broadly typical for their age. The good provision in the Early Years ensures that children settle quickly and achieve well. This means that by the end of the Reception year, most have made good progress based on their starting points.

Pupils' work in lessons and in their books, together with the school's own assessment information shows that pupils, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities continue to achieve well as they move through the school to Year 6. Standards in English, mathematics and science at age 11 are above average. However, whilst improving, the progress pupils make in writing is not as rapid as it is in reading.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' personal development and well-being including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are good and have a strong impact on their good progress. Relationships are

second to none; pupils are self-assured and get on well with each other. They behave well, have positive attitudes to their work and greatly enjoy their learning as demonstrated by their improved attendance and their enthusiasm for the wide range of opportunities that the school provides. Typically, pupils place great trust in their teachers and feel very safe and secure in school. As one child said 'the school is a friendly and safe place to be, everyone knows each other well'.

Pupils develop a strong social conscience and show initiative. They willingly take on extra responsibility such as acting as leaders for the 'Freddie Fitness club' sessions and through the work of the active school council. As a result, pupils make a good contribution to school life and the wider community. They know about other faiths and cultures different from their own and recognise the needs of others through their regular charitable donations.

Pupils have an excellent understanding of the importance of maintaining a healthy lifestyle through regular exercise and a balanced diet. They appreciate and take advantage of the additional sporting activities and healthy options at lunch and snacks at break time. Encouraging pupils to walk to school, gaining the Activemark and Healthy Schools awards together with winning a competition for making bread, confirms the school's very strong commitment to pupils' health and well-being.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The quality of teaching and learning is good overall and enables pupils to make good progress. The best teaching is characterised by positive relationships, high levels of praise and encouragement from staff and clear lesson objectives. Here, teachers are secure in their subject knowledge and pupils are challenged in their thinking. For example, pupils in Year 5 and 6 were able to test and deepen their knowledge of using cause and effect connections by discussing how a wacky mouse trap might work. In addition, teaching assistants provide an additional and effective layer of teaching, especially in supporting pupils who find learning difficult. Where teaching is less successful, too many worksheets are used and opportunities are sometimes missed to fully engage pupils in their learning. Pupils' work is sometimes over-directed which means that learning is not as effective as it could be because pupils are not always actively involved in making decisions or given opportunities where they can discuss and share their ideas with others.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is good and has improved well since the time of the last inspection. This is because activities are more relevant to pupils' needs and build well on their prior experiences. There is a stronger focus on tasks that promote pupils' abilities to investigate, inquire and work independently. However the school recognises that recent improvements in this area could go further. Topic themes such as the Second World War and recycling waste materials into artwork are carefully planned. Links between other subjects are clearly identified. There are good opportunities for pupils to engage in sport and to learn about the importance of leading a healthy lifestyle. Strong links with the local secondary school have been used to broaden the curriculum and extend pupils experiences. For example, pupils talked enthusiastically about their visit to the local high school where they were able to conduct experiments in a science

laboratory. An extensive range of extra-curricular activities coupled with well planned visits and visitors enrich pupils experiences and add considerable enjoyment to their learning and personal development.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

An advantage of this small school is that all adults know the pupils and their families extremely well. As a result, the quality of pastoral care is outstanding. The guidance and support for pupils is good. The school takes exceptionally good care of all pupils and pays very close attention to the needs of every child in a caring and nurturing environment. For example, staff are very successful in ensuring that all pupils, including the most vulnerable and those that present significant challenges in their social and emotional needs, feel fully included in all lessons and school activities. Very good communication with parents ensures that children settle quickly and are well supported from the moment they start school. All required systems and checks are in place to safeguard the pupils' health and well-being. Effective links with local schools and agencies underpin the very good arrangements to support pupils' smooth transition to secondary school.

The school tracks pupils' progress well. The information is used effectively to plan the next steps in learning, identify pupils who need additional help and in the setting of individual targets. Procedures for marking pupils' work are improving. There are some good examples, particularly in writing, where pupils are given clear guidance on how to improve their work and reach the next level. However, this is not yet consistent across all areas of pupils' work.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher is held in high regard and sets the tone. She is responsible for the warm, caring environment that prevails where every child is fully included in what is offered and known as an individual. She is passionate about raising the confidence and self-esteem of all learners by creating a climate where everybody is somebody. She is very well supported by an equally committed team of staff and governors who share her vision and sense of purpose. As a consequence, there is clear agreement on what the school does well and where further improvements are required. For example, senior leaders are well aware that the school improvement plan requires some fine tuning with a sharper focus on raising achievement, clearer outcomes for pupils and milestones to measure success.

The governing body plays an effective role in shaping the school's direction and holding it to account. Its members are very committed and have a good understanding of the school's strengths and areas for improvement.

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 capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	2
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	2
How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	2
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	2
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	1
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	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/or disabilities make progress	2

¹Grade 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.

Personal development and well-being

How good are 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	1
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	2
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 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

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 eliminated	1
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	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**

Dear Children

Inspection of Allonby Primary School, Cumbria, CA15 6QG

Thank you for being so friendly and helpful during my recent visit. I really enjoyed chatting to you in lessons, over lunch and in the interview with the school council. I learnt a great deal about your school. You expressed your opinions very clearly and they were very helpful to me. I am writing to you to let you know what I found out.

Firstly and most importantly, I would like you to know that you go to a good school. It is such a friendly and safe place to be. I can see why you enjoy coming every morning. Some of your parents told me that you even want to come when you are not feeling well! I was really pleased to see how well you get on with each other and how you help one another in class and around the school. You make good progress in your work and are well taught and very well looked after. I was very impressed with how you all took part in the 'Freddie Fit' session at the beginning of the day to keep in good shape. It must be quite tricky to bend and stretch while singing along to Bob the Builder. I really enjoyed eating your home made bread. It was delicious. Congratulations on winning the bread making award. Not many schools will have one of those.

You told me that you enjoy your work and that your teachers give you lots of different things to do. I could see this for myself in your excellent model of a bird that you made by collecting items washed up on the local beach and in your enjoyment of your Second World War project.

Mrs Martin and all the staff work very hard to make the school as good as it can be and I am confident that it will continue to improve. To help with this, I have asked them to ensure that some of you make faster progress in your writing and that more of your lessons allow you to learn in different ways by encouraging you to make further decisions for yourselves about how you learn. I agree with you that sometimes you spend too long listening and not enough time being active in some activities. You can help by telling your teachers what makes your lessons exciting and what helps you to learn.

Keep trying hard. I wish you well for the future.

Yours sincerely

Steve Isherwood

Her Majesty's Inspector