

Blennerhasset School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	112104
Local Authority	Cumbria
Inspection number	325529
Inspection date	10 July 2009
Reporting inspector	Gillian Salter-Smith

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	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	39
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 Peter Sant
Headteacher	Mrs Allyson Stevenson
Date of previous school inspection	1 March 2006
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Blennerhasset Wigton Cumbria CA7 3RL
Telephone number	01697 320677
Fax number	01697 320677

Age group	3–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors.

Description of the school

This is a very small school. Although there are two classes, one mainly for Key Stage 1 pupils and the other mainly for Key Stage 2, classes are not restricted by age and pupils are able to work alongside other pupils of similar level of attainment in different subjects. The Early Years Foundation Stage unit provides for a small number of full-time Nursery and Reception age children who are taught most of the day in a dedicated unit. They join Key Stage 1 pupils for some lessons each day.

The proportion of pupils eligible for a free school meal is well below average. All pupils are from White British backgrounds. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is above average. The proportion of pupils starting school and leaving at times other than the usual start is above average.

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. Relationships between staff and pupils are very good and pupils feel very safe and secure in school. Parents are very supportive of school. Comments typical of many are, 'We are very happy with the school. Both children really enjoy going. All the staff have been very helpful, any concerns are always sorted out' and 'Best school I could hope for.'

Staff know each child very well indeed and they are highly alert to their individual needs and changing circumstances. Pupils know they can turn to adults in the school if they have any worries and that they will get the help they need. Consequently, pupils thrive in this secure, caring and supportive family atmosphere. Personal development is good. Pupils enjoy school and this is reflected in their outstanding attendance. Behaviour is outstanding both in lessons and around the school and pupils thoroughly enjoy the recently developed playground and garden areas. Pupils appreciate the many extra activities that include plenty of music and sport. They have a positive and knowledgeable approach to maintaining a healthy lifestyle and they enjoy frequent exercise sessions in addition to physical education lessons. The school council makes a good contribution to developing the school. It has been closely involved in the planning of the recently improved playground. Older pupils especially take on responsibilities well and enjoy taking care of younger pupils. Pupils' good basic skills in literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT) alongside their ability to work independently and take on responsibilities prepare them well for their futures and their next stage of education. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good overall. Pupils are highly involved in their local community and spend time with people of different ages and backgrounds within it. The curriculum has provided pupils with a good knowledge of people from different countries and religions. However, pupils have limited direct contact or communication with pupils of their own age from different backgrounds within the diverse society of modern day Britain. The school is aware of this and there are plans to link with a school in inner London.

Pupils' achievement is good. Pupils make good progress and all reach at least the standards expected of them. Standards fluctuate from year to year because of the small number of pupils in each year group. In 2008, the results of national tests showed standards were above average and standards for current Year 6 pupils are similar. Effective teaching leads to pupils reaching their challenging targets. Achievement in mathematics and reading is stronger than in writing. The school has introduced a range of initiatives and approaches to teaching and the curriculum that is raising standards and pupils' interest in writing, especially boys. Opportunities for pupils to practise and improve their writing when writing about topics that really interest them are developing, but have not yet been fully exploited.

Leadership, including governance, has succeeded in raising standards and improving the quality of provision. Strengths and weaknesses are known and actions taken to bring about improvements are effective. The school's standard of accommodation has been improved a great deal, both indoors and outdoors, and provides a stimulating learning environment. However, indoor and outdoor activities do not sufficiently build on children's individual interests or provide ongoing experiments and exploration in the Early Years Foundation Stage.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children enjoy their time in school. Parents very much appreciate the way the school works and communicates with them to ensure that their children are happy, settled and ready to learn. Children play happily alongside each other and they enjoy working with adults. From a variety of different starting points children make good progress and most meet average standards on entry to Key Stage 1. The small number of children in each year group means that there is some variation from year to year in their strengths within the areas of learning. Play and learning activities offer children a range of appropriate experiences and a good balance between activities led by adults and those they initiate themselves. Children's progress is tracked and this information is beginning to be used to plan activities that meet individual needs. However, indoor and outdoor activities do not sufficiently build on children's individual interests or provide ongoing experiments and exploration. There are good arrangements to ensure children's health and safety and statutory welfare requirements are met. Leaders understand the strengths and weaknesses of the provision and are taking steps to make further improvements. The recent and significant improvement in the accommodation, both indoors and outdoors, has resulted in a spacious, well resourced learning environment.

What the school should do to improve further

- Provide more opportunities to practise and improve writing across the subjects.
- Develop the curriculum in Early Years Foundation Stage by following children's own interests and offering regular opportunities for ongoing experiments and exploration both indoors and outdoors.
- Provide pupils with more opportunities to engage with peers from different backgrounds to themselves, to reflect the diversity of modern-day Britain.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils' achievement is good. Numbers in each year group are very small and results in national assessments in Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 vary a great deal from year to year. The results of the 2008 Key Stage 1 national assessments were broadly average in writing and reading and above average in mathematics. The 2008 national test results for Year 6 pupils were above average overall and especially strong in mathematics and reading. Inspection evidence shows that Standards for current Year 2 and Year 6 pupils are broadly similar to those in 2008. The school's assessment information and scrutiny of pupils' work shows that pupils across the school make good overall progress year on year as a result of good teaching. Challenging targets for individual pupils are usually met and achievement is especially strong in mathematics. The school recognises the need to raise standards further in writing. It has successfully introduced a range of initiatives, such as the focus on individual pupil targets related to specific writing skills, and the use of exciting stories and drama to encourage pupils, especially boys, to write. These initiatives are beginning to accelerate progress in writing.

Pupils, who join the school, at times other than the usual start, settle in quickly and make similar progress to other pupils. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress because staff provide well targeted support that allows the right balance between providing support and developing pupils' independence.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' excellent attendance reflects their eagerness to come to school. Pupils enjoy learning and they feel happy, safe and secure in school. They reveal a positive approach to maintaining a healthy lifestyle in their discussions on healthy eating and through their involvement in many sporting activities. Pupils make a strong contribution to the school community through, for example, contributing their ideas to class and school expectations of behaviour and conduct. Overall, pupils' consideration of others and behaviour is outstanding. They benefit from many opportunities to contribute to their local community. For example, they have attended local parish council meetings and enjoy meeting older people from the community. As the curriculum provides more opportunities, pupils' knowledge and understanding of people from other religious and cultural backgrounds across the world is widening. Although pupils have had some opportunity to meet with other children from different backgrounds, this is not yet extended sufficiently to reflect the diversity of modern day Britain. Pupils develop good basic skills; they play and work together cooperatively, and are developing into independent learners. All of these show they are well prepared for their futures.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Very good relationships between staff and pupils mean that pupils enjoy learning and develop into confident learners. Pupils use laptop computers confidently and they enjoy working in groups and carrying out practical tasks. Teachers use ICT effectively to support learning and make tasks interesting. Learning is well planned with clear learning outcomes that pupils understand. Activities are purposeful, challenging and well-focused. Pupils' progress is assessed and tracked and this information is used to set individual targets for pupils that guide their learning in literacy and mathematics. Pupils find their targets helpful in knowing what to improve. Teachers mark pupils' work regularly and provide useful guidance on how to improve. Pupils make good use of this guidance and carry out improvements to their work. Pupils are beginning to take responsibility for assessing their own and each other's work.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is well focused on developing pupils' basic skills. The school is developing an approach to the curriculum that links learning between subjects and makes activities more relevant and interesting to pupils. They are in the early stages of providing meaningful opportunities to practise and improve writing through work in different subjects. A well planned programme of visits and visitors to the school ensure that pupils learn and benefit from exciting events. In the immediate locality, for example, a visit to a small holding that rears pigs, is used well to provide interest and stimulation for learning.

The school works in effective partnership with local providers to ensure that pupils benefit from a very good range of extra-curricular activities. Parents appreciate the many activities provided for their children that include opportunities to participate in music and sport. The school's development of extended services is in the early stages and is beginning to engage a high number of children in activities such as 'break dancing'. The curriculum is well planned to

promote pupils' personal development. Opportunities to share thoughts and feelings in class are well structured.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

In this small school staff know the pupils very well indeed. Staff are very watchful, of pupils' needs and alert to their changing emotions, for example, in response to family situations. An adult is identified as a key support worker for all pupils and pupils know there is someone they can talk to if they need to. The high quality of relationships means that pupils feel very well supported and secure. Most parents appreciate the additional support and guidance provided for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Good partnership with a range of local agencies means that pupils receive the support that they need. Individual pupil targets for attendance have helped to ensure that attendance has improved and it is outstanding. Arrangements to ensure the safeguarding of pupils meet requirements.

Pupils' progress is tracked and the information is used to identify and tackle potential underachievement. Pupils have benefited from early intervention and support and caught up where they have lagged behind, for example in their reading. Pupils benefit from helpful guidance from their teachers when their work is marked.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Good leadership and management ensure that staff are well focused on providing a supportive environment in which pupils achieve well. Regular monitoring of pupils' progress and the quality of teaching provides leadership with a secure knowledge of the school's strengths and the priorities for improvement. Targets for academic progress and attendance are challenging and individual pupil's targets are used to accelerate progress, for example in writing.

Governors are well informed by senior leadership. They are knowledgeable and bring a very good range of experience and skills to the role. They are closely involved in the day to day life of the school and carry out a robust monitoring role.

Leadership, including governance, has a clear understanding of what needs to be done to further develop the satisfactory promotion of community cohesion especially in extending pupils' awareness of different communities. Much is already done to develop pupils' understanding of different cultures, religions and backgrounds within the local community and in relation to the global community. Leaders are aware of the need to develop pupils' awareness of the cultural diversity of modern day Britain and plans are in place to do so.

A good capacity to improve is demonstrated in the successful ability to identify and tackle areas of weakness such as achievement in writing and the much improved accommodation and resources, particularly in the Early Years Foundation Stage.

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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 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?	2
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	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	1
The behaviour of learners	1
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	2
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	3
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**

13 July 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Blennerhasset School, Cumbria, CA7 3RL

Many thanks for the welcome you gave to me and my colleague when we inspected your school.

You go to a good school and are a credit to it. Your behaviour is excellent and your attendance is outstanding. We were impressed about how much you knew about how to stay healthy and safe. Through your school council and other community events you make a good contribution to your local community. You respond well to good teaching and achieve well in your academic work, especially in mathematics. Relationships between pupils and staff are very good and staff take very good care of you so that you feel safe and secure. Leaders and governors work well together to ensure that you are well provided for and make good progress.

We have asked leaders, including governors, to make the following improvements.

- Enable more of you to practise and improve your writing in different subjects.
- Develop the opportunities offered to children in the Early Years Foundation Stage to follow their own interests and have more regular opportunities for ongoing experiments and exploration both indoors and outdoors.
- Provide you with more opportunities to engage with pupils from different backgrounds to yourselves that reflect the diversity of modern day Britain.

You can help by continuing to attend school every day and take notice of the advice teachers give you about how to improve.

Yours sincerely

Gill Salter-Smith

Lead inspector