

Stoneraise School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	112122
Local Authority	Cumbria
Inspection number	325534
Inspection dates	30 April –1 May 2009
Reporting inspector	Sheila Mawer

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)	120
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 Mike McNally
Headteacher	Mr Andrew Mason
Date of previous school inspection	28 February 2006
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Durdar Carlisle Cumbria CA5 7AT
Telephone number	01228 607803
Fax number	01228 607804

Age group	3–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one additional inspector.

Description of the school

This small school serves a mixed rural and urban area, close to Carlisle. Almost all the pupils are from White British backgrounds. The proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals is well below average. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is broadly average. In some year groups an above average proportion of pupils have joined or left the school at times other than Reception. The school has Early Years Foundation Stage provision, with places for eight Nursery children and 16 Reception children. These children share a classroom with some Year 1 pupils. There is a privately run out-of-school club on site. This is being inspected separately.

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 that has improved well from the previous inspection. Some aspects of its work are outstanding. Exceptionally positive views were expressed about the school from virtually all parents in a high return of questionnaires. The following comment is typical of many. 'The school has an excellent reputation in the community and we are proud our children attend. It is a fabulous school.' Parents are supremely confident that the excellent care and support their children receive is at the heart of the school's provision.

Achievement is good. Standards are broadly average and progress is good. Pupils start school with skills that are lower than typical for their age. Standards in English are stronger than in mathematics and science. By Year 6, pupils reach above average standards in English and all groups of pupils make very good progress. In mathematics and science, where standards are broadly average, more able pupils do not always make the progress they should. The good teaching has many strengths. It is particularly effective in teaching English, where pupils are challenged well. A few weaknesses in the teaching of mathematics and science are impacting on progress. The pace of learning for more able pupils in mathematics is not always fast enough for them to learn quickly. In science pupils are not helped sufficiently to record and interpret the results of experiments to a high enough standard. Subject leaders in mathematics and science are new to their posts and have not yet addressed these weaknesses. Academic guidance is generally good. Individual targets are clearly understood by pupils, marking is helpful and they know how to improve their work. Because targets for more able pupils in mathematics and science are not as challenging as in writing, pupils do not always make the same progress as they do in writing.

Personal development is outstanding. Behaviour is exemplary and pupils feel very safe. They say there is no bullying, as everyone gets on so well together. Pupils benefit considerably in their personal development from a good curriculum and outstanding enrichment. They stay fit and healthy and learn successfully beyond the classroom. Very effective partnerships with different organisations help to promote good community cohesion. Pupils contribute exceptionally well to their own and the local community. Members of the school council, as well as improving their own school, have also advised a school nearby to set up its own school council. The school is a beacon of sustainability in the locality and one of the few schools in the country to have a wind turbine for heating. Effective action is taken to engage with other faiths and schools. Pupils make visits to a multi-faith centre in Scotland and have email links with a school in the Ascension Islands. Visiting artists from different countries share their talents. Pupils remember in particular being introduced to Islamic Art. These experiences impact very positively on their responsibilities as citizens and their future lives.

Leadership, management and governance are good. The leadership of the headteacher is excellent and pivotal to the school's success. The resources available to the school are used well and the school has a good capacity to improve further. Although there are thorough tracking systems to show individual progress made by pupils, the current system is not refined enough to give a clear picture of standards across the school.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Provision is good. Children start school with skills that are lower than typical for their age and often much lower in writing, reading and calculations. They make good progress, settle quickly and enjoy their learning. Although some reach average standards by the start of Year 1, many children are still below expectations in aspects of language and mathematics. Staff provide good levels of care and support in a safe environment. Well planned activities help the children to develop responsibility and independence. As a result personal development and well-being are good. Children have good opportunities for purposeful play both in and out of doors. They learn effectively with adults and independently. Although the outdoor area is small, staff make the most of the space available to give the children appropriate experiences. Plans are well advanced for a new outdoor area, which will accommodate more children and give greater access during the day. The Reception children often work alongside Year 1 on purposeful activities. In one activity a good balance was achieved when the children solved number problems with the teacher on the 'plasma screen' and then pursued their own problem-solving activities using the train track and water tray. The Early Years Foundation Stage is well led and managed. Adults work closely together to review their practice and make improvements. Assessment is thorough and helps the staff to match their support to the developing needs of the children.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve some aspects of the teaching, subject leadership and target-setting in mathematics and science to provide pupils with the skills and challenge needed to make good progress in their learning.
- Refine the tracking of pupils' progress to provide leadership with a clear overview of standards and progress across the school.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils' achievement is good and standards are broadly average. Pupils make good progress through the school. In teacher assessment by Year 2, standards have been broadly average in recent years, including the latest results in 2008. Standards continue to be average in the current Year 2. In the higher Level 3, pupils generally do well in reading and writing, but results in mathematics and science are sometimes below average. In 2008, results in national tests by Year 6 were above average in English and broadly average in mathematics. Science dipped to below average. Pupils in Year 6 in 2008 performed well in the tests at the higher Level 5 in English, but the higher level results in mathematics and science were below average. More than a quarter of pupils who took the tests in 2008 joined the school after Reception and this affected the results. Pupils currently in Year 6 are on course to reach above average standards, from their average starting points. Through the school standards in mathematics and science for more able pupils are generally not as high as they are in English.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

An exceptionally caring ethos and outstanding enrichment activities successfully promotes pupils' excellent spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Pupils are very happy and confident learners and their enjoyment of school is reflected in above average attendance.

They show considerable care and concern for each other and their behaviour is excellent. Support is particularly noticeable in 'paired talk' sessions. Pupils display an excellent understanding of how to keep safe. They recall important messages learnt from visitors such as the police of how to manage risk, especially around keeping safe from strangers. Pupils have a strong determination to keep fit and healthy. They thrive in the very good facilities for active sports and excellent healthy meals. Fundraising extends pupils awareness of the wider world. Pupils provide a valuable service in the smooth running of the school by taking on additional responsibilities, such as sports leaders and playground buddies. Through conservation projects, the school extends its responsibilities into the local community. Pupils are successfully involved in many social enterprise schemes. The school council, for example, manages the income of the school's recycling unit. These initiatives and pupils good progress in the basic skills prepares them well for their future lives.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching is good. The organisation of pupils into ability groups for English in Key Stage 2 and the 'Big Writing' initiative is impacting positively on progress in English. Outstanding relationships and high expectations of behaviour create a productive learning environment. In this supportive atmosphere pupils are keen to learn. The weekly 'wow' afternoons are particularly enjoyed, as pupils are able to extend their skills into activities such as making nest boxes and talking to 'Fair Trade' visitors. Teachers' subject knowledge is secure and good resources are used to enliven the learning. Sometimes lessons are planned as 'learning journeys' as a means of developing different skills. An excellent lesson on the pyramids in Years 3 and 4 gave pupils outstanding opportunities to extend historical, language, information and communication technology (ICT) and mathematical skills in a meaningful way. There are a few areas for development to improve the teaching in mathematics and science. In mathematics, the pace of the lesson sometimes slows, affecting the speed of thinking and effort made by the more able pupils in particular. While pupils carry out many experiments in science, there is less focus on helping them to record and interpret their results in enough detail. These weaknesses are preventing some pupils from reaching the higher levels in mathematics and science.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is good and the school provides excellent enhancement activities. A broad and balanced approach is achieved between academic, physical and creative learning. The school works closely with a local arts organisation and art and drama are given a high focus. A new play space with a performance veranda has been built in the playground to extend opportunities for drama and role-play. High quality ceramics produced by pupils in the school are proudly displayed. All pupils learn a modern foreign language and there is a wealth of visits and visitors, which adds considerably to pupils' enjoyment of school and their academic progress. Partnerships with other schools and different organisations provide an excellent range of activities before and after school. A strong emphasis on personal, social and health education has resulted in the awards of Healthy School Status and Activemark. The school modifies the curriculum well for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and these pupils make good progress. The needs of more able pupils are not fully met in mathematics and science.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Pupils benefit considerably from excellent care and support. Staff are highly committed to pupils' welfare and safety and develop strong and supportive relationships with them. Safeguarding procedures meet government requirements. The significant redevelopment of the school site has improved security levels for everyone. The school has developed very productive partnerships with external specialists. They are used widely to support pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and to successfully integrate an increasing number of pupils from other schools. In excellent relationships with parents, the school has recently held its first parenting class in partnership with a national charity. Academic guidance is good overall. Pupils understand their targets for improvement in writing, science and mathematics. They regularly review their own progress in writing. Marking, especially in writing, is very helpful in giving pupils clear pointers for improvement. The targets set for more able pupils in writing are demanding. The targets provide less challenge for more able pupils in mathematics and science to drive them forward and aim high.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Parents are fully justified in their praise for the outstanding leadership of the headteacher. When they say that he runs the school with 'pride and dedication', they are exactly right. He manages a heavy teaching commitment and unites the staff in a shared vision of continued improvements. The school is generally making good use of challenging targets to raise standards further. Self-evaluation is accurate. The school has developed an extensive tracking system to show each pupil's progress. The current system is not refined enough to give leaders a clear picture of standards across the school. Subject leadership is satisfactory and improving. Leaders for science and mathematics are new to their subjects and are still developing their monitoring roles. The school provides a very supportive and harmonious environment, where pupils are valued strongly as individuals. Governance is good. Governors are very supportive of the school and are helping to shape its direction. They take on responsibility for different subjects and through their monitoring have a good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses in the school.

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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 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	3
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?	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
The extent to which 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 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?	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**

1 May 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Stoneraise School, Cumbria, CA5 7AT

I am writing to thank you all very much for the part you played in the recent inspection of your school. The warm welcome you gave me and your keenness to talk about the school all helped me to make my judgements. I'm particularly grateful for the information that the school and class council gave me. Please will you thank your parents for completing the questionnaires with their views of the school.

I know you will be pleased to learn that you go to a good school and some aspects are outstanding. Your behaviour is excellent and there are lots of strengths in the way you keep fit, healthy and safe. You are all very lucky to have so much space and facilities for sporting events and the opportunity to enjoy healthy and well presented meals. In every lesson I observed and out at play I saw only happy and friendly young people, keen to help each other. You are particularly supportive of your partners in the 'paired talk' sessions.

It's hardly surprising that you are all making good progress as your headteacher and all of the staff and governors are working successfully together to provide good teaching, a rich and enjoyable learning environment and a lot of exciting activities in the curriculum. Their outstanding care and support for you all is preparing you all well from Nursery to Year 6 for your future lives.

I have asked the school to make a few improvements to the teaching of mathematics and science, to help some of you to reach higher standards. You might notice that your targets in mathematics and science will become a bit harder. I know you will see that as a challenge and continue to work hard to succeed. The school is also going to check regularly to see if the progress you are making in your classes and across the school is as good as it can be.

I hope you will all continue to enjoy the rest of the school year. I know Year 6 will be sorry to leave Stoneraise at the end of the term. Good luck at your new schools. Best wishes to the rest of you for the future.

Yours faithfully

Sheila Mawer

Lead inspector