

Aspatia Richmond Hill School

Inspection report

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| Unique Reference Number | 112127 |
| Local Authority | Cumbria |
| Inspection number | 325535 |
| Inspection dates | 29–30 April 2009 |
| Reporting inspector | Jim Bennetts |

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.

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| Type of school | Primary |
| School category | Community |
| Age range of pupils | 3–11 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number on roll | |
| School (total) | 178 |
| 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 Henry Barker |
| Headteacher | Mr Barry Dickinson |
| Date of previous school inspection | 10 January 2006 |
| Date of previous funded early education inspection | Not previously inspected |
| Date of previous childcare inspection | Not previously inspected |
| School address | Queens Street Aspatia Wigton Cumbria CA7 3BQ |
| Telephone number | 01697 320650 |
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors.

Description of the school

This primary school is a little smaller than average; it serves the small town of Aspatria and the surrounding area. All pupils are of White British heritage. A higher than average proportion of pupils is eligible for free school meals. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is above average; a very small number have statements of special educational need. A privately run Children’s Centre is on the school site. It provides childcare for babies and very young children and has been inspected recently. As at the time of the last inspection, this primary school has been through a period of staffing instability that has disrupted the continuity of teaching and management.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Aspatria Richmond Hill School provides a satisfactory education for its pupils and much of its work is good. Though there have been considerable difficulties, and some disappointing results in the recent past, the school is improving rapidly. Some parents are very pleased with the school's provision. They comment on the improved progress '... due to dedicated staff;...', and how much their children enjoy school, '...thoroughly enjoys school and has many friends'.

When children start in the Nursery, many have communication and social skills below those expected for their age. They make rapid headway and by Year 1 standards are usually close to those found nationally. In 2008, results were disappointing in national assessments at age 7 in reading, writing and mathematics and at age 11 in English, mathematics and science; a significant proportion of pupils underachieved. This was due to staffing issues and other matters in the recent past that have now been tackled effectively. Standards in Years 2 and 6 are higher now, though a little below average. Across the school, achievement is satisfactory and improving rapidly.

Pupils' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is good. Behaviour is good in lessons and throughout the school; very good improvement has been secured. A few parents expressed concerns about behaviour, but problems have been resolved and the occasional incidents of poor behaviour are now dealt with effectively. Pupils enjoy school and attend well. Pupils have a good understanding of healthy lifestyles and how to stay safe. They make a good contribution to the life of the school and local community. Older pupils are soundly prepared for the next stage of education. The school takes good care of pupils. Those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are well looked after, and thrive.

The curriculum is sound and opportunities are taken to use visits and visitors to advantage. Teaching and learning are good. Most teachers are quite new to the school. They plan lessons effectively and cultivate good attitudes and relationships in classrooms so pupils are keen to learn. Teachers are very well supported by teaching assistants. Good teaching is raising achievement this year, as is evident from the sampling of pupils' work and observation of lessons.

There has been significant disruption to leadership over the last few years. However, current leaders and staff are working well together to provide good teaching that is accelerating pupils' progress. Leadership is effective, but further work is warranted on some aspects, such as what standards pupils have reached in elements of their work, and what needs to be done to improve learning further. Recently appointed leaders have not yet had the opportunity to fully develop their monitoring and evaluation skills. Relationships with parents are positive; many parents greatly appreciate what the school does, but more could be done to convince a few parents of recent improvements. The headteacher has been valiant in pulling the school through a difficult time over the last two years. The school is vigorously supported and encouraged by an energetic governing body. There is sound capacity for further improvement.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children's skills and capabilities on entry to the Nursery vary greatly from year to year but are generally less well developed than children of similar age nationally. They are further behind in their ability to communicate and in their personal development. Assessments in the Nursery

and Reception classes are careful, perceptive and reliable. They show that children make good progress. When children start Year 1, standards are slightly below those found nationally although they do vary from year to year. The variety of adult-led and free-choice activities indoors, and outdoors, is very well planned. Children's interest and initiative are engaged and they learn well. Very young children welcomed a policeman's visit and they understood what he was telling them about keeping themselves safe. Parents appreciate the good communication with school about their children's progress through the regular communication between home and school. They especially value the opportunity to see their children's work when the staff send samples of work, records and photographs home; helping to foster all-round development and partnership. Scrupulous attention is paid to safeguarding and other welfare matters and parents know which of the adults to contact about their child. Teachers and assistants are skilful in their work with young children and the provision is managed well. The Early Years Foundation Stage is a strength of the school; it gets pupils off to a good start.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards, particularly in English and mathematics, and continue to improve achievement further.
- Develop the leadership and management skills of recently appointed leaders.

A small proportion of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted Inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Achievement is satisfactory and standards are broadly average. The disappointing outcomes in national assessments at both key stages in 2008 were associated with staffing issues and other matters. With a more stable and effective staff pupils' progress and achievement are now improving rapidly.

Standards in the present Year 2 are below average. These pupils have made satisfactory progress from their low starting point in Year 1. Achievement is stronger and progress is more rapid in Year 1. The 2008 national assessments in reading, writing and mathematics for Year 2 pupils were very low and reflected underachievement for many pupils.

In Key Stage 2, progress is accelerating rapidly, as a consequence of effective teaching; as a result, standards in the present Year 6 are on course to rise. However, a small proportion of pupils has not caught up sufficiently on previous slower progress. They are not yet reaching the standards expected of them based on their performance at age 7. In Years 4 and 5, samples of writing from October and March show substantial improvement. The 2008 results of national tests for Year 6 pupils in English, mathematics and science were below average. About half the year group achieved satisfactorily, but others made much less progress than expected.

There is very good support from teaching assistants and effective planned intervention for those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. These pupils often make good progress because of the quality of the support they receive and the priority the school gives to their needs.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Knowledge and awareness of cultures other than their own is satisfactory. Relationships are good throughout the school. Pupils show respect to teachers and other adults. They play together outdoors enthusiastically, but safely. Behaviour is good. There is an occasional incident involving behavioural problems; however, the vast majority behave sensibly and with consideration. Pupils say there is no bullying and that they feel safe. Exclusions are very rare. Attendance is good and improving. Pupils have a good understanding of healthy lifestyles and how to stay safe. Emphasis on sport is strong; a good proportion of pupils participate well in extra-curricular sport. Pupils enjoy exercising responsibility and make a good contribution to the school as councillors, play leaders or monitors. They contribute well to the local community, through activities with the local church, raising funds for a variety of charities and through having representatives at town council meetings. Pupils' social competence and improving basic skills in English and mathematics prepare them soundly for the next stages of education.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are good. No unsatisfactory teaching was seen during the inspection, most lessons were good and some were outstanding.

In all lessons, pupils behave well and are keen to try hard. Relationships are very good. Lessons are well planned, with good provision for pupils of different ability. Most lessons have good pace, though occasionally activities go on a little too long or pupils are allowed to work with insufficient urgency. Some staff use information and communication technology very capably, and this enhances learning. Marking of pupils' written work is usually painstaking and helpful in explaining how improvements can be made. Learning is supported very effectively by skilful teaching assistants. Teamwork between teachers and assistants is very good. In the best lessons, adults are aware when pupils would benefit from help and give well-judged and timely advice. However, occasionally teachers miss opportunities to correct errors and weaknesses in pupils' work and questioning of pupils in class discussion is not always as penetrating as it might be.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum is satisfactory. It meets pupils' needs and all statutory requirements. There is good provision for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and satisfactory provision for able, gifted and talented pupils. A satisfactory range of visits and visitors enriches the curriculum. For example, pupils visit the local nuclear power plant, and physical education skills are well coached through inputs from a local football club. A comprehensive programme of personal, social, health and citizenship education promotes personal development well; for example, the school council has attended a local town council meeting. There is insufficient planning to ensure that pupils have a good knowledge and understanding of cultures other than their own. There is a reasonable range of extra-curricular activities, mainly in sport, as well as a cookery and art club. Links with local high schools are good, especially through sports partnerships.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

This is a caring school. Pupils, especially those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, receive good support. The school works well with a variety of local agencies to ensure pupils' needs are met. Safeguarding measures meet all requirements, child protection strategies are managed well and pupils learn how to stay safe. Adults provide good support for pupils' emotional development, encouraging positive attitudes through a valued system of awards, such as 'Star of the Week'. Good relationships, encouragement and support are major factors in pupils' enjoyment of school. Additional services, such as the school nurse and 'Kidsafe', an organisation committed to helping children to stay safe and sound, support personal development well. Good communication and partnership with parents underpin pupils' progress. Teaching assistants support well those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Pupils are given good advice about how to improve and marking is usually detailed and helpful. Improving systems for tracking progress are helping to identify underachievement at an early stage and trigger intervention. The school is aware that more precision is needed in pinpointing the standards at which pupils are working in aspects of some subjects.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

There has been considerable disruption to leadership in recent years. For a time, associated with staffing difficulties, weaknesses in pupils' behaviour developed and achievement was affected. These have been firmly and very effectively dealt with; behaviour is now good and achievement is gaining momentum. Staff have pulled together as a team, and leaders at all levels are increasing in effectiveness. Recent staffing decisions have been effective in strengthening provision and providing for all pupils' needs. Staff new to the teaching profession, and those more established, are keen to benefit from professional development. This has been promoted well by the local authority and assisted by partner schools. Staffing and resources are well deployed and leading to rapid acceleration in pupils' progress. Value for money is good. Though the school's self-evaluation has sometimes lacked clarity, there is sound use of targets to drive improvement across the range of the school's work. There has been appropriate attention to the points for improvement from the last inspection. A number of leaders are recently in post and have not yet had the opportunity to develop fully their monitoring roles.

The school promotes good equality of opportunity through ensuring that all groups of pupils are learning well; and pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are well supported and cared for and make good progress.

Community cohesion is promoted well within the school and the local community. There are some strong aspects of outreach to the local community. Pupils are actively involved in the community through, for example, church events, performances for the public, re-cycling activities and through attendance at a town council meeting. Although pupils are aware of cultures other than their own through curriculum activities and special theme days, the school is aware that there is more to do to develop links with wider-ranging communities nationally and globally.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

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| 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

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| How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners? | 3 |
| 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 | 3 |

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

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|---|---|
| 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

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| How well do learners achieve? | 3 |
| The standards ¹ reached by learners | 3 |
| How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners | 3 |
| 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

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|---|---|
| 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 | 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 | 3 |

The quality of provision

| | |
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| 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? | 3 |
| How well are learners cared for, guided and supported? | 2 |

Leadership and management

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| How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners? | 3 |
| How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education | 3 |
| How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards | 3 |
| The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation | 3 |
| 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**

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Aspatria Richmond Hill School, Cumbria, CA7 3BQ

Thank you for all the help you gave to Mr Clark and me when we inspected your school. At the present time, we think the school provides you with a satisfactory education and that many of the things it does are good.

We could see that you enjoy lessons and the other things that go on in school. You get on well together and you are keen to learn. We were told by staff and some of your parents that a year or two ago behaviour was not as good as it should have been. We found that you behave well in school and outside, and you told us that you too think behaviour has improved.

As you know, there have been a lot of changes of staff over the last few years. Some have recently taken on new responsibilities. Your headteacher was away for two years and has been busy sorting out quite a few things since he came back. All this has meant that pupils did not do as well as they have done in the past and results turned out to be disappointing for Year 2 and Year 6 last year. We found that lessons are now going well. When we looked at samples of your work it became clear that many of you are making good headway. The children in Nursery and Reception do really well. Overall, throughout the school, you are achieving satisfactorily. We hope that you will sustain the improvement this year and raise the standards of your work in all subjects further.

The school provides you with an appropriate range of activities. You are well looked after, and the school gives very good support to those of you who sometimes find it difficult to learn. The way the school is run is satisfactory.

We have asked the school to make sure that standards continue to improve. We have asked that the skills of the new leaders are developed in order to ensure that the school continues to be well run and organised.

We saw how keen you are to learn. Keep it up! We wish you, and your school, every success in the future.

Yours faithfully

Jim Bennetts

Lead inspector