

Grasslot Infant School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	112132
Local Authority	Cumbria
Inspection number	325536
Inspection dates	11–12 February 2009
Reporting inspector	Joan Elton

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	Infant
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	76
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	Mrs Joanne Ford
Headteacher	Mrs Karen Loudon
Date of previous school inspection	12 December 2005
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Grasslot Maryport Cumbria CA15 8BT
Telephone number	01900 812268
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Age group	3–7
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

This is a very small school, where all pupils are of White British origin. The area is socio-economically disadvantaged. A higher than average proportion of children are eligible for free school meals. The percentage of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is well above the national average. The school has an Early Years Foundation Stage, which comprises Nursery and Reception classes. A breakfast club is run by Barnardos and the governors organise daily wraparound care for Nursery children so that they can stay for lunch and for an afternoon session.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

This is an outstanding school which richly deserves its huge popularity with parents. Many comment on its friendly, welcoming atmosphere, its excellent and very approachable staff and the wide variety of activities available to children. As one parent wrote: 'It feels more like a family than a school because staff are willing to go the extra mile, when family circumstances require.' Parents really appreciate the regular communication via text messaging and newsletters about their children's learning, family workshops and general school events. They enjoy active involvement in school life and successfully use the help they are given to support their child's learning. Many recognise the outstanding progress children make, both personally and academically from their entry into Nursery.

When children enter Nursery, their skills are very low in the areas of language, number and social skills. In the current Year 2, skills in reading, writing and mathematics are above the national average and pupils are on track to reach high standards in the National Assessments. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make comparable progress to their peers because of very well matched provision. This represents outstanding achievement. Pupils have highly positive attitudes to their learning and enjoy school life. This is reflected in their excellent behaviour and good attendance. Pupils have a very effective knowledge of healthy and safe lifestyles; they respect and love their teachers and teaching assistants, and enjoy responsibility, whether it is taking the register or acting as playtime buddies. They have many opportunities to contribute to community life, locally and globally. When they leave school, most pupils are confident speakers, are cooperative in group situations, and have very effective basic skills and real enthusiasm for learning.

This excellent preparation for Junior school is the result of outstanding teaching and learning, a vibrant curriculum and a very high standard of care. Teaching always extends previous learning because of accurate assessment and stimulating activities, which match individual abilities. Staff use many strategies to sustain concentration and give pupils much encouragement. The curriculum has something for every pupil; it is broad, balanced and relevant to all individual needs. Pupils' safety and welfare are kept under constant review to ensure safeguarding systems are highly effective at all times. Exemplary practice in care is seen in the nurture classes for vulnerable pupils and the wraparound care for Nursery children. All pupils are guided and supported exceptionally well. They are shown how to assess their work by set criteria and given very clear direction on how to make progress.

The school is very well run. This is due to the clear direction and excellent organisation of the headteacher and the hard work of staff and governors. All share the same commitment to improvement; all successfully contribute to the raising of achievement. The leadership team has effectively promoted community cohesion within the school population and, by its involvement in county and inter-school projects, in the local area. It has good global links through its regular contacts with a Tanzanian village and is currently evaluating multicultural resources to further raise pupils' awareness of diversity. The school constantly reviews its own effectiveness. Its self-evaluation is accurate, if rather modest about its many successes.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children achieve well in the Early Years Foundation Stage because of good provision. They begin Nursery with skills well below those typical for this age group in language, number and social skills. Progress in Nursery is steady and accelerates in Reception. When they leave Reception, the overwhelming majority of children reach average standards and some exceed them. Staff work well as a team and create an attractive and safe environment, where children have independent access to equipment. Well planned activities capture and sustain the children's interests and successfully ensure overall learning. There is a good balance of teacher-led and child-initiated learning. Assessment procedures are effective. The outdoor area is not always used effectively in Nursery because planning and preparation do not identify appropriate tasks and routines. Some opportunities to extend children's basic skills, such as phonics and number are therefore missed. The school meets all welfare requirements and everything is done throughout the day to raise children's awareness of health and safety. Staff are particularly successful at developing children's personal, social and emotional education. They establish very effective procedures, listen to the children well and help them express their feelings. Their reassurance, support and encouragement continue throughout the day, including during wraparound sessions. These features help promote a warm and caring environment, where children, parents and carers feel welcome. Induction is carefully planned and there are effective arrangements to ensure smooth transition between classes. The setting is well led and well managed.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that the outdoor area is used effectively in Nursery to extend children's basic skills and learning across the curriculum.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

Pupils currently in Year 2 entered Year 1 having reached average standards. They are now working above the national average and are on track to reach high standards in the National Assessments in reading, writing and mathematics. This is a projected improvement on the 2007 and 2008 results, which were broadly average, but similar to the 2006 results in all subjects. From their low starting points in Nursery, this represents outstanding achievement for the current Year 2 pupils. Progress since the beginning of the school year has been excellent. It has accelerated because of excellent tracking systems, a revitalised curriculum, greater consistency of teaching and learning and appropriate learning programmes for all groups of pupils, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The school correctly identified reading and writing for further development and introduced a wide range of strategies to improve them. These initiatives have been successful. Pupils are enthusiastic about reading whilst their writing has appropriate purpose, sense of audience and variety.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is outstanding. Pupils have the necessary knowledge, skills and attitudes to grow into responsible citizens. They fully appreciate the importance of food, exercise, rest and hygiene to a healthy

lifestyle and know how to keep themselves safe. They relish learning and the wide variety of school life. This is shown in their excellent behaviour and good attendance. Pupils refer enthusiastically to their reading books, their experiments in melting ice and their after-school clubs, particularly cookery, computers and craft. They take responsibilities very seriously, whether it is cleaning Lottie the guinea pig, selling red noses for charity or representing their peers on the school council. They are very proud of their playtime equipment because it incorporates their ideas. Opportunities to join in local and county community events are many: family fun days are arranged for parents and their children; there are very close links with the church; sporting tournaments take place with other schools and pupils participate in the county's dance festival in Carlisle. Pupils know about different careers and their detailed awareness of cultural diversity has resulted from cross-curricular projects and visitors such as artists, musicians and storytellers. Pupils transfer to the Junior school with very effective basic skills.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 1

Teaching and learning are outstanding. All staff make excellent use of time to extend learning, either by questioning pupils to check understanding, challenging them to give full and more precise answers or demonstrating methods to improve quality. Explanations are always very clear, activities match ability and recording is adapted so that all can succeed. Much revision of previous work and consolidation of new work is built into lessons so that pupils' confidence grows and they welcome the next challenge. Lessons are well planned using assessment data, and information and communication technology (ICT) is used imaginatively to support and extend learning. This happened when pupils enlivened their text on Cinderella with taped character voices. The use of specialist teachers for gymnastics, music and storytelling adds variety and pupils respond exceptionally well to high expectations in all subjects. Teachers' marking is very constructive and pupils are given ample opportunity to respond. This extends individual learning very well.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The curriculum is outstanding. It has all the excitement, breadth and relevance to extend pupils' interests and abilities. There are appropriate intervention programmes for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Priority is rightly given to the development of basic skills but these are also extended imaginatively across the curriculum. Subjects are well organised into meaningful projects and pupils enjoy opportunities for problem solving, practical work and exploration. The curriculum is enriched with a very good range of visits, visitors and after-school clubs. Due to the very successful development of the outside classroom as a learning environment, pupils' imagination is stimulated and they engage in a wider range of activities with a wider circle of friends, though this is less marked among children in the Nursery than among the older pupils. Uplifting assemblies, focused lessons and a school ethos, which values the individual, the emphasis on respect and responsibility, considerably enhance pupils' personal development. When pupils think, speak or write, they have many rich experiences to draw upon.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

These are excellent because the school does everything it can to keep pupils safe, secure and happy. All statutory regulations are met; all systems are kept under review. Training and risk assessments are routinely updated and pupils receive regular lessons and daily prompts about manners, health and safety. Staff listen to their pupils sympathetically as they talk through their emotions. Learning mentors support pupils and their carers very sensitively at vulnerable times. There are excellent systems for tracking pupils' academic progress. These are easily accessible and carefully interpreted so that pupils receive appropriate targets and support. All programmes are monitored rigorously and adaptations made to secure success. As a result, pupils know what they do well and what they need to do to succeed. They also know how to evaluate their own work by set criteria. The school works hard to involve parents in their children's learning. Progress has accelerated where this has been successful.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

The school is extremely successful because it is very well organised by an excellent headteacher and a very talented team of staff and governors. The headteacher has a clear vision of how she would like the school to progress and the ability to communicate this well to all stakeholders. She has introduced very effective systems for monitoring all aspects of school life and is highly focused on raising achievement. She has empowered her staff by training, responsibility and encouragement so that they now lead initiatives to lift performance. Governance is good. Some governors are new to the role but all share the same vision and have a good overview of the school. With the headteacher and staff team, governors have ensured that the school is well resourced, provides an outstanding level of care and an excellent education. Links with parents, outside agencies, and the local, wider and global community have been promoted to enhance the provision on offer to pupils. By doing this, the school has made a good contribution to community cohesion and plans are in place to enhance this further. The school is growing in numbers and the leadership team are very clear about their priorities over the coming years. Excellent progress has been made since the last inspection and the school has excellent capacity to make further improvements. It currently provides outstanding value for money.

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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?	1
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	1

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?	1
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?	1
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	1
How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress	1

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	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?	1
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1
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	1
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 February 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Grasslot Infant School, Cumbria, CA15 8BT

Thank you for the kind welcome you gave me during your recent inspection. I enjoyed meeting you all and reading your parents' comments on the school. These were very interesting. Please thank your parents on my behalf.

I think your school is outstanding and well deserves its huge popularity with yourselves and your parents. Most of you make excellent progress in your work and also as caring, responsible young people. When you leave this school you can read, write and calculate well for your age. You also know how to keep healthy and safe and are happy in your work. Your behaviour is excellent and you enjoy attending church services, raising money for charity and joining with other schools for sport and singing. You cooperate very well with each other and are most respectful to your teachers, visitors and other adults.

Your teaching and learning are excellent and you learn some exciting topics and complete some imaginative activities. I am also most impressed with your computer skills. You practise them regularly and are very confident. All members of staff take excellent care of you so that you feel safe and happy. They guide and support you well so that you make much progress. The staff in your school work very effectively as a team to provide you with an excellent education.

The Early Years Foundation Stage (that is Nursery and Reception) is good and I have asked the school to make one improvement in the Nursery. I have asked it:

- to ensure that when Nursery children go outside they have as many opportunities to learn as they do inside.

I know your school will succeed in this as all the adults in your school want you to have the best education possible and they have been so successful since the last inspection. Please keep enjoying your learning. Do your homework and read as often as you can. I send my very best wishes to you and your families.

Yours sincerely

Joan Elton

Lead inspector