

Ewanrigg Junior School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	112136
Local Authority	Cumbria
Inspection number	325538
Inspection dates	9–10 October 2008
Reporting inspector	Lynne Read

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

Type of school	Junior
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	7–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	150
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Russell White
Headteacher	Miss Yvonne Craig
Date of previous school inspection	1 October 2005
School address	Ennerdale Road Maryport Cumbria CA15 8HN
Telephone number	01900 812330
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Age group	7–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

This smaller than average junior school serves an area with a high incidence of social and economic disadvantage. The proportion of pupils who take up free school meals is much higher than usual. There is a far higher proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities than in most schools. The vast majority of pupils are of White British heritage. Pupils are taught in mixed-age classes and are set into ability groups for English and mathematics. Extended provision includes a breakfast club and holiday care run by an outside provider.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Ewanrigg Juniors is a satisfactory and improving school. Personal development and care, guidance and support are good. Value for money is satisfactory. Parents have very good confidence in the school. They praise the nurturing environment, the wide variety of additional activities and the teachers whom they describe as 'supportive and encouraging'. Good links with outside agencies and schools result in many benefits, for example, additional opportunities for sport and expert help to meet individual pupils' needs.

The school has been striving to raise standards but improvement has been slow in the past. Now, with a settled complement of teachers and more accurate assessments of pupils' attainment on entry, progress has accelerated. From a starting point which is below average and often much lower in writing, achievement is satisfactory overall and good in reading. Overall, standards are just below average but those in writing are too low and need to rise. The proportion of pupils attaining the higher level in mathematics and science is below average. Pupils who have emotional or learning difficulties have good self-esteem and make good progress towards their individual targets.

Personal development, including behaviour, is good and a strength of the school. Staff provide a safe, caring environment and pupils enjoy their learning. They are actively encouraged to work towards the school's aim - 'Be all you can be'. As a result, pupils become confident and there is a calm, productive atmosphere. Pupils take an active role in running the school. For example, the elected councillors ensure that pupils' views are taken into account and the play leaders and buddies help to make playtimes enjoyable. Such experience of responsibility, combined with good attitudes, provide a sound platform for the next phase of education and for life in the wider world.

Teaching is satisfactory overall, and often good in reading and for pupils who have learning or emotional difficulties. A new approach to the teaching of writing is beginning to show some success and pupils enjoy these sessions. This is a recent initiative, and has not yet made a significant impact on standards. In all lessons, the more able pupils have harder work. In mathematics, however, they do not have enough problem-solving tasks to stretch them fully and there are too few opportunities for investigation and experimental work in science. The curriculum is satisfactory with some good enrichment. Pupils are enthusiastic about the interesting variety of out-of-school clubs, and the wide range of visits and visitors. A strong emphasis on personal, social and health education enables pupils to make informed choices about their lifestyles, and they learn to deal with social and moral issues.

Leadership and management are satisfactory with strengths in the committed and effective leadership by the headteacher who is held in high esteem by parents, children and staff. Managers and governors know the school well and have a clear agenda for raising standards. Targets and action planning are ambitious and set within a realistic framework. All staff are committed to striving for excellence and very good advantage is taken of the local authority's support. Having seen initial successes, staff are eager to move on and there is a good capacity for the school to improve further.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve standards and progress in writing through consolidating the new programme for teaching the subject.

- Improve progress for the more able pupils in mathematics by placing more emphasis on problem solving, and in science by including more opportunities for investigating and experimenting.

A small proportion of 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. The school's reliable assessments of pupils entering Year 3 show that attainment is below average and, for a significant number of pupils, standards in writing are well below average. Overall standards are just below average. Early indications from the latest provisional Year 6 test results show that standards have improved. Pupils are making better progress in reading, which is a strength, with a good proportion of pupils attaining the higher level. The proportion of pupils attaining the expected level in mathematics and science is broadly average, although fewer than average attain the higher level. In mathematics, pupils are less confident with problem-solving work. They have a secure knowledge of scientific facts but have insufficient experience with practical investigations and experiments. Writing is weaker and below average. The school has embarked on a special project in order to boost writing skills. Pupils are using a wider range of styles and developing a better understanding of grammar and punctuation. However, this work has not yet influenced overall standards.

Pupils who have learning or emotional difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress towards their targets and become confident learners. Boys and girls do equally well from their starting points.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' personal development, including their spiritual, moral and social development is good. Pupils form good relationships with adults, and each other, which underpin learning. They have a secure understanding of rights and responsibilities, and sensitively consider the consequences of their actions on other people. They have good attitudes to learning, work hard and behave well.

Pupils say they enjoy school, feel safe and that any incident of bullying is dealt with swiftly. One pupil commented, 'The teachers care about us and are always there when you need them.' Pupils especially value the support of the learning mentor who helps them with any problems and helps to maintain a satisfactory level of attendance.

Pupils' awareness of the importance of healthy lifestyles is shown in the way they use the good opportunities provided for physical activity and healthy eating. They respect other people's views and beliefs and know about world faiths. At present, they have little opportunity to engage with those from different ethnic or religious backgrounds. A range of good enterprise opportunities helps to provide a taste of the world of work and contributes to the school community. Pupils apply for responsibilities and carry out their tasks diligently. For example, the 'yellow caps' help with general organisation and office tasks while the 'blue caps' act as 'young technicians'.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching is satisfactory overall and there is good practice for pupils with learning or emotional difficulties and in reading. Teachers make the purpose of lessons clear so pupils know exactly what is expected. The school philosophy, 'look, learn, listen, love and laugh' underpins planning. Teachers include games, short challenges, discussion times and fun in lessons, all of which promote speaking, listening and collaborative skills very effectively.

Teachers have raised their expectations of pupils. Tasks are planned to challenge all ability groups and help them meet their targets. However, there are occasions in mathematics when the more able pupils are not extended enough in terms of problem solving. In science, pupils have too few opportunities to investigate and experiment. Experienced teaching assistants provide good, targeted support, both in class and through a range of special groups for pupils who need extra help.

Teachers provide good guidance and feedback in lessons. Helpful comments in marking show what has been done well and point out the next steps. Parents are encouraged to be involved in their children's learning. They have regular progress meetings, newsletters and workshops which give them the information they need to support their children at home.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum is satisfactory and includes a good emphasis on personal education. Pupils have satisfactory opportunities to write when studying other subjects but there is scope to extend this work further. Several intervention groups help pupils to catch up with their learning. This provides a good safety net for those not meeting expectations and is an important factor in the improved progress at the school. Gifted or talented pupils sometimes have extra challenges but these could be extended further.

Good enrichment is provided for learning. Profitable links with local schools and colleges provide additional opportunities for science and technology. A wide range of after-school activities extends interests, for example in music and computer work. Further enhancement is provided by visits and visitors. Pupils certainly talked enthusiastically about the forthcoming trip to Paris. Pupils have regular opportunities to engage with the community, for example by entering the local 'Ewanrigg's got talent' competition and raising funds for charitable causes.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Pupils' needs are paramount in this school. Safeguarding and child protection measures meet all requirements and are well established. The breakfast club provides a good start to the day for many pupils. Staff go to great lengths to secure specialist support, for example, from social, educational and medical agencies, to meet individual needs. The learning mentor has a high profile in school and is always ready to help. Through daily contact and regular surveys conducted by the Every Child Matters Leader the learning mentor is able to gauge views and tackle emerging issues quickly. Good procedures are in place to ease the transfer from the infant schools and

prepare for the next phase of education. The 'red caps' provide interesting games for pupils but the playground itself is bare and uninspiring. This is an area for development.

New guidance, in the form of target ladders, is provided for pupils' academic progress. These show pupils what they need to do to improve and are shared with parents. They are constantly referred to in lessons and support learning well.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Leadership and management, including governance, are satisfactory with some strengths. The headteacher provides strong direction for the school and is instrumental in promoting the nurturing environment. With a newly strengthened senior management team and stable staffing this year, progress has accelerated. The school is a welcoming place. Pupils enjoy their involvement in community and local events, such as the recent 'Rock Challenge'. A safer schools project supports good links with the neighbouring community and helps to maintain harmonious relationships.

Staff work as a good team; they are focused on providing the best for children and committed to raising standards. They have introduced several initiatives to improve progress in previous years but, often due to circumstances beyond their control, these were not as successful as intended. New systems for assessing, monitoring and evaluating the performance of the school are more rigorous in providing frequent checks on pupils' learning and enable staff to instigate swift action where needed. The school's development plan focuses sharply on continuing to raise standards and improve progress. The governors are supportive and soundly informed through links with subject managers and reports. Many of them are new and are keen to strengthen their work by attending training and developing their role further. At present, governance is satisfactory and all statutory requirements are met.

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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?	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	2

Achievement and standards

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

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	3
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

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?	3
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

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	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	3
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	3
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	3
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3
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**

12 October 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Ewanrigg Junior School, Cumbria, CA15 8HN

Thank you very much for the warm, cheerful welcome and for all the help you gave me when I came to visit your school. I had an interesting time in your company and would like to tell you what I found out.

Ewanrigg Juniors is a friendly school and it provides you with a satisfactory quality of education. Your behaviour is good. I enjoyed seeing all the stickers and awards that you have received for your hard work and thoughtfulness. You describe your lessons as 'exciting' and I know you have fun because I heard lots of laughter during the two days. You say that you especially enjoy the different activities provided out of lesson time. I hope the older ones enjoy the trip to Paris later in the year; it certainly sounds interesting. Your headteacher and her staff work hard to make sure you are happy and safe. I think the trust you have in your teachers encourages you to try hard and is an important reason why you say you like school. Please thank your parents for sending me their replies to the questionnaire. They are pleased with the school and say that you are 'happy, well taught and confident'.

You are making better progress now and most of you are reaching the challenging targets that your teachers set. Well done! However, I think you can do even better in writing and in some more advanced parts of mathematics and science. Your teachers agree and will be introducing ways to help you. I think you will like the extra challenges, such as working on problems, investigating and conducting experiments.

Thank you once again for the interesting conversations I had and for letting me know your views so clearly. Good luck for the future, keep smiling and continue to enjoy your happy school.

Yours sincerely

Mrs L Read

Lead inspector