

Northside Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	112142
Local Authority	Cumbria
Inspection number	325539
Inspection dates	13–14 November 2008
Reporting inspector	Brian Dower

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)	75
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 Donna Bradley
Headteacher	Mrs Helen Ford
Date of previous school inspection	1 January 2006
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Northside Workington Cumbria CA14 1BD
Telephone number	01900 325230
Fax number	01900 325227

Age group	3–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

This is a small school which serves an area of social and economic deprivation. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is well above average, as is that of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those with a statement of special educational need. Pupils are of White British heritage. They are taught in four mixed-age classes. The school has Healthy School status, the Activemark and the Eco Bronze award.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Northside Primary is a good school which enjoys the overwhelming support of parents. They appreciate the excellent care and support their children receive. It is a lively learning community where pupils feel safe and secure in the knowledge that they are known well by every adult. Pupils enjoy coming to school and they like their teachers and find lessons interesting.

Test results compared to national averages can fluctuate from year to year because in such a small school the underachievement of just one or two pupils can cause a dip in overall performance. Results over time show that the school is doing well because, by the end of Year 6, standards are broadly average and progress and achievement are good. This is down to good teaching and the pupils' exemplary behaviour and positive attitudes to work. Teachers and support staff work hard to bring out the best in pupils. They succeed. Pupils' social development is outstanding. Their understanding of well-being is excellent; they eat healthily and take plenty of exercise. The older pupils help the younger children. A Year 5 girl's gentle encouragement of a younger girl to talk to the inspector about school was a lesson in sensitivity.

Pupils grow in maturity. The outstanding personal and social education programme and excellent enrichment activities do much to boost their confidence and self-esteem. Pupils' personal development is good and by the time they leave they have the skills to make the most of the next stage of their education and the personal qualities to be successful in life.

Learning activities are varied and suitably challenging for the different age groups in each of the four classes. Expectations are high, and teachers and support staff are encouraging and supportive. There is a good balance between whole-class work and group activities, and effective use is made of information and communication technology (ICT) for teaching and learning. Some of the written work seen was not presented in an orderly and logical way. Although good practice was seen in marking, it is variable in quality and does not always indicate how pupils can improve. However, teachers and support assistants are skilled at monitoring the pace of learning in lessons and giving timely advice to those who need help.

Leadership, management and governance are good. The headteacher, teachers and support staff work well as a team. They have raised expectations and been successful in giving pupils a sense of self-worth. Their analysis of pupils' needs and their tracking of progress over time are excellent and they are quick to intervene effectively when weaknesses are uncovered. All are determined to do even better. They recognise that their planning needs to define the improvements they seek in pupils' development so that change is geared to increasing the rate of progress. Such ambition, together with the improvements made since the last inspection, mean that the school is well placed to continue to improve.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Most children's skills when they start in the Nursery are well below those typical for children of their age. This is particularly apparent in their social, communication and listening skills. By the time they start in Year 1, the attainment of most children has improved significantly so that they meet the expected targets, although there are a few who continue to work within the early learning goals. Progress across the Foundation Stage is very good and children achieve well. This is down to very good and sometimes outstanding teaching and to the exemplary care given to each child. Children respond well to all the experiences provided. They feel happy and

secure in school because they receive the reassurance and emotional support they need. They can then look beyond their own needs and become sensitive to the feelings and needs of others. The leadership and management of the Foundation Stage are very good. A lot has been done to improve the outdoor area to enable children to explore and learn through experience. Space is restricted, however, and therefore there is a limit to the range of active and practical learning activities used.

What the school should do to improve further

- Develop a common and consistent approach to marking.
- In forward planning, define areas for improvement in terms of pupils' development so that the impact of change can be measured.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Standards are average and achievement is good. Caution must be exercised when comparing the school's standards with national averages in any one year because of the very small number of pupils involved. As a result, standards can vary significantly from year to year. Standards by the end of Year 2 in reading, writing and mathematics have been improving from a low point in 2004 to significantly above average in 2007. Standards in English, mathematics and science by the end of Year 6 were on a downward trend from 2004, but in 2007 improved in English and science to just below average and in mathematics to above average. The school's targets were met in English and exceeded in mathematics that year. Provisional 2008 results show that standards in English and science were maintained. There was a significant dip in performance in mathematics. The quality of work seen in lessons and the standards in pupils' books show that progress in mathematics is now good. Although pupils' progress can be variable, achievement over time is good because of the progress pupils make from a low starting point to the standards expected of pupils by the end of Year 6.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' personal development and well-being, including their spiritual, cultural and moral development, are good. A key contributory factor is the excellent personal, social and health education (PSHE) curriculum which does much to boost pupils' self-confidence and social awareness. Pupils' social development, their healthy approach to what they eat and the exercise they take are outstanding. By the time they leave school they are working well together, they are sensitive to each other's needs and the older pupils help and support the younger children. The older pupils' contribution to the school community is excellent. The school recognises that pupils' understanding of themselves as citizens of the wider world, however, is an area for development. Pupils enjoy coming to school and participate enthusiastically in a range of extra-curricular activities. They say that there is no bullying in school and that everyone gets on well together. The behaviour seen in lessons and around the school was exemplary. Most pupils attend well, although a minority of pupils have relatively poor attendance. The school is doing all it can to improve this. When compared to similar schools, attendance is good. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education because of the good academic progress they make and because they have come so far in their personal development.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are good. Pupils say they enjoy their lessons and like their teachers and the classroom assistants. They are attentive in class, work well in group activities and can concentrate for extended periods of time. Classroom routines are well established and lessons are orderly and productive. The standard of presentation in books is at times unsatisfactory. There are pupils who need help in setting out their work in an orderly and logical way. Although good practice was seen, marking is variable in quality. Teachers and their assistants know the pupils well and ensure learning activities are structured in difficulty to meet the needs of the different age and ability groups in a class. Good use is made of time to allow pupils to reflect on what they are learning and what they need to do to improve. Teaching assistants work effectively to support those pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and, as a result, they make the same good progress in their learning as other pupils. Good use is made of ICT as a teaching and learning aid. Pupils enjoy working on the interactive whiteboard, particularly manipulating numbers to solve problems in mathematics.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is good with outstanding features. In addition to the PSHE programme, extra-curricular and enrichment activities are excellent and well attended. They do much to increase pupils' enjoyment of work and their commitment to school. Provision for pupils in all year groups has been well thought out and is evaluated to seek improvement on a regular basis. There is a good balance between provision for developing their basic skills and opportunities for them to broaden their understanding of the world around them. The school makes full use of the natural environment and local industries to achieve the latter. Outside expertise is used well to ensure that the pupils do not miss out on anything. For example, the popular Friday afternoon music sessions are lively and enjoyable, and links are established with other schools to access sports coaching which is not available locally. The school sees the need to make better curriculum provision for pupils' understanding of citizenship.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

This aspect of the school's work is exemplary. Every pupil is known well by every adult in the school. The working atmosphere is one of a harmonious and lively community. Parents and carers are appreciative of the excellent care and support their children receive. The school ensures that all pupils, including vulnerable groups, are fully involved in the school's day-to-day activities. There are excellent links with outside agencies to support the school in achieving such integration. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities receive effective additional support from the teaching assistants. Safeguarding procedures comply with government requirements, and health and safety audits are conducted on a regular basis. Risk assessments are carried out when needed and particularly for visits out of school. The school has an excellent tracking system in place to monitor pupils' progress over time and to identify and respond to areas for improvement. The improved English results in 2007, for example, were because of action taken to develop pupils' ability to write at length.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership, management and governance are good. The headteacher provides strong leadership and she is well supported by able and committed senior and class teachers and support staff. There is team spirit, a sense that all are pulling in the same direction and, as a result, morale is high. In such a small school, teachers take on a range of responsibilities and support each other in carrying them out. Subject leadership is therefore good. Challenging targets are used to raise achievement and is one reason why standards rose in 2007. The school has done a great deal to forge links with parents and carers to involve them more in their children's education and its contribution to securing greater community cohesion has been good. It sees that it can build further on the progress already made. Governors are committed to the school's success and are closely involved in its day-to-day life. They and the headteacher know how well the school is doing and have identified the provision that needs to be better. They recognise that they have not defined the outcomes and success criteria of each improvement priority in terms of pupils' development. There have been good improvements since the last inspection, particularly in terms of improved performance at the higher levels in the 2007 national tests. The school therefore has a good capacity to build on what has already been achieved.

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?	1
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?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
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	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?	1

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	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	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**

15th November 2008.

15 November 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Northside Primary School, Cumbria, CA14 1BD

Thank you for the warm welcome I received when I inspected your school. I enjoyed my inspection a great deal and only wish I had had more time to see all your interesting work and all the activities you told me about. Many of you talked to me and helped me understand what is good about your school. Please thank your parents for sending in the questionnaire returns.

Yours is a good school because you work hard and get on so well together. You told me that you enjoy your lessons and like your teachers and the support staff. They think highly of you and want to give you the best possible education. By the end of Year 6, most of you reach standards which are expected of pupils of that age and so your progress is good. Equally important, you are becoming confident young people who have the skills and personal qualities to be successful in life.

I saw a lot of good work when I was in your lessons. You had opportunities to work by yourselves and in groups, and then come together as a class to talk about what you had learnt. The teachers and the support assistants helped you when you got stuck and gave you harder tasks to do when you got through your work quickly. Some of you find it difficult to set out your written work neatly and clearly, and sometimes the marking of your work does not help you with this. I have asked your school to give you more support with this.

In such a small school, all the teachers and support staff have to work as a team on many tasks and they do this so efficiently that the school is well led. They want to do even better in the future and I have suggested that they agree on a few aspects of your development to concentrate on.

Thank you again for your help in this inspection and I would like to wish you all the very best in your work and every success in the future.

Yours sincerely

Brian Dower

Lead inspector