

# Lowca Community School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	112158
<b>Local Authority</b>	Cumbria
<b>Inspection number</b>	325542
<b>Inspection dates</b>	2–3 October 2008
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	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.

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<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School (total)	65
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
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mr Carl Ormerod
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr David Fasham
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	1 October 2005
<b>Date of previous funded early education inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
<b>Date of previous childcare inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
<b>School address</b>	Lowca Whitehaven Cumbria CA28 6QS
<b>Telephone number</b>	01946 852656
<b>Fax number</b>	01946 852656

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<b>Age group</b>	4–11
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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

## Description of the school

This very small school serves an isolated but expanding coastal community, which has pockets of significant social and economic disadvantage. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is above average. The percentage of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is above average. Nearly all pupils are of White British heritage. Since the last inspection there have been considerable periods of instability in staffing and management. A new headteacher was appointed in January 2007. There are eight children of Reception age in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS).

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 3

Lowca is a satisfactory school and is improving under the good leadership of the headteacher. Since his appointment he has halted the decline in pupils' progress and standards are rising again. Parents are confident in his ability to move the school forward and speak of the 'way he brings out the best in teachers and pupils'. The roles of subject leaders are still developing and have yet to be tested. Many governors are new to the school. They are growing in effectiveness with an improved committee structure. The chair of governors is well informed, providing valuable support to the headteacher as a critical friend. Improvements since the last inspection have been satisfactory. Although there is a programme for monitoring the teaching and learning and other priorities, insufficient rigour is used to measure the impact of improvements against the progress pupils make. The school has sufficient capacity to improve and gives satisfactory value for money.

Achievement is satisfactory and standards are average by Year 6. Although standards are not high enough in reading and writing by Year 2, or in writing and mathematics by Year 6, they are improving due to the satisfactory and sometimes good teaching. Sometimes in the satisfactory lessons, the progress made by more able pupils slows when work does not extend their existing skills and knowledge enough. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress because work is matched to their abilities and they are well supported. The school has improved the procedures it uses to check pupils' performance, but pupils are not assessing their own work enough as they are unsure of their targets. The limited accommodation and resources in the EYFS is having a somewhat negative impact on the numbers of children reaching the expected goals in their learning.

Personal development and care and support are good. This is a very caring school where children feel safe and are happy and fit. The school's success is recognised in an Activemark award. While attendance is slowly improving, the importance of good attendance is not shared enough with pupils. Pupils enjoy school and are well behaved. They make a good contribution to school life and are proud of their strong involvement in the village. Their progress in key skills is preparing them satisfactorily for the future.

The curriculum is satisfactory with strengths in community links. The building of a new kitchen and appointment of a chef has provided pupils with outstandingly healthy lunches as well as linking the school and village more closely through shared meals and celebrations.

## Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

### Grade: 3

Provision and achievement in the EYFS is satisfactory. Attainment as children start school varies because of the very small numbers involved but skills are often below, and sometimes well below, what is typical for their age. They benefit significantly in their personal development from being taught together in a small group as well as being in a class with Year 1 and 2 pupils who offer good role models for behaviour. With good supportive relationships from adults, they grow into happy and confident learners. Most reach the goals expected of five-year-olds in their personal development. In other areas of learning, many of the children's skills remain below expectations. Teaching is satisfactory and children make satisfactory progress. Joint planning between staff includes organising practical activities matched to the children's age and experiences. However, there are not always enough strategies used during these sessions

to engage the children in conversation to improve their weaker spoken language. Although space is limited for indoor and outdoor play, the staff give the children some choices in their learning. Resources are in short supply for imaginative play and investigations, this impacts negatively at times on the progress they make. Adult-led activities in literacy and numeracy are planned appropriately and children enjoy them. The responsibility of managing the EYFS is shared between the headteacher and all staff. This team keep a general overview of the quality of provision and they are aware of the aspects that need further attention.

### **What the school should do to improve further**

- Improve the quality of teaching in both key stages so that all pupils, especially the more able, can achieve well and reach higher standards, particularly in reading and writing in Key Stage 1 and writing and mathematics in Key Stage 2.
- Develop the skills of leaders and managers to ensure greater rigour in monitoring to bring about improvements in standards and progress.
- Improve the quality of teaching and resources in the EYFS to provide more opportunities to extend imaginative play and improve children's language skills.

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. Children start school with skills that vary from year to year because of the small numbers involved but are often lower than what is typical for this age. From Years 1 to 6 pupils make satisfactory progress from their individual starting points. Standards reached by pupils in English, mathematics and science are broadly average by Year 6. Results in the Year 6 national tests have varied since the last inspection. In 2007 they were average and indications for 2008 from unvalidated school data are of broadly similar results. Higher attaining pupils, over time, have performed well in reading and science, but less successfully in writing and mathematics. Although girls performed better than boys in 2007, there is no trend of stronger performance by girls throughout the school.

Standards at the end of Year 2 are significantly below average in reading and writing and broadly average in mathematics. Standards dipped in 2007. High staff turnover disrupted pupils' learning at this time. The latest teacher assessments for 2008 show some improvement in writing with a few pupils exceeding the level expected for their age in mathematics and reading.

Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress because they benefit from additional support well matched to their individual needs.

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 2**

Pupils enjoy school, especially the many sporting activities, some with other schools. This keeps them fit and engaged with the wider community. The high take up of excellent meals at lunchtime help pupils to keep healthy. They enjoy sampling new foods, including vegetables they grow themselves. Relationships are good. All pupils interact well together, feel safe and say that bullying is rare. Attendance is slowly improving. With support from outside agencies, attendance rates have risen to broadly average this term. Pupils behave well and their spiritual,

moral and social development is good. Cultural development is satisfactory as pupils begin to develop an involvement in the wider world. Links have been established with schools in the United Kingdom and abroad. Pupils contribute well to a strong community within the school. Older pupils, acting as 'play partners' help younger pupils to develop their physical skills at playtime. The school council are working with the village to develop a sports and environmental area. Good community links are promoted through fundraising, community meals and assemblies. Pupils by Year 6 are mature and thoughtful citizens and adequately equipped for their future lives.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 3**

Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Pupils respond well to the encouragement they receive from staff and say, 'Our teachers smile a lot and are always ready to help'. These good relationships help pupils to work happily in a supportive atmosphere. Most teachers provide work that is well planned and matched to the needs of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Teaching assistants provide good support for these pupils and they make good progress. For example, a teaching assistant led a group on a practical 'banana game' that helped improve their counting skills. More able pupils are not always motivated enough to achieve well when provided with less challenging tasks. Sometimes they have to sit for too long listening to the teacher, without the opportunity to develop their own ideas. In one challenging lesson the teacher captured the enthusiasm of the pupils, when in groups they had to write out instructions for a card game. The more able pupils had to use more precise language and this really made them think hard.

### **Curriculum and other activities**

#### **Grade: 3**

The curriculum is satisfactory and there are some good features. Provision to develop basic skills is satisfactory, although work set for more able pupils does not always match their needs closely enough. In the infant class opportunities to extend writing skills across the curriculum are not exploited sufficiently because of an over-reliance on work sheets in some subjects. Enrichment activities are good and strongly promoted through community links. The partnership with the village, nearby schools and places of local interest are fully exploited. Materials promoting social and emotional aspects of learning have extended provision for personal, social and health education well. The school has in the past offered its own after-school clubs and is seeking the views of pupils about the sort of clubs they would like in school to develop their talents and interests.

### **Care, guidance and support**

#### **Grade: 3**

The school's caring and supportive ethos helps pupils to feel safe, valued and well looked after. One parent wrote, 'Every child is well supported to meet their individual needs'. Arrangements for safeguarding meet government requirements. Staff support vulnerable pupils well and the school is quick to identify and support pupils with particular learning needs, often calling on outside agencies for additional advice. Academic guidance is satisfactory and developing. The recent procedures for tracking pupils' progress are helping to identify pockets of

underachievement and provide the right support. Reading intervention sessions, for example, resulted in significant progress for several pupils in a short period of time. At the moment, pupils are not familiar with their own learning targets, but helpful marking is telling them what they need to do to improve their writing.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 3**

Leadership, management and governance are satisfactory. The headteacher is clear about the priorities to help the school improve, including setting challenging targets. He has rightly focused on raising achievement, which dipped significantly since the last inspection, and on stabilising staffing. Morale is high amongst staff and there is strong teamwork. Their roles as subject leaders are slowly developing to make them more effective. They work collaboratively to meet the school's aim of 'aiming high, with the community, for the community'. The school is successful in promoting community cohesion and good quality care for pupils. There is still some way to go to achieve high standards for all pupils. This is because the monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning is not rigorous enough yet to bring about a significant improvement in standards. In most respects the school's judgement of its provision through self-evaluation is accurate.

Governors are beginning to hold the school to account through training and a better understanding of the standards in the school and its strengths and areas for development. They are in the early stages of evaluating its work, but are fully committed to its continued improvement. They are strongly involved in ensuring that the school is an integral part of the community.

Inspection judgements

**Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaints about school inspection', which is available from Ofsted's website: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk).**

## 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	3

### Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	3
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	3
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?	3
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	2
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	3

### Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards <sup>1</sup> 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

<sup>1</sup>Grade 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

<b>How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	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

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

## Leadership and management

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	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	3
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	2
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**

3 October 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Lowca Community School, Cumbria, CA28 6QS

Thank you for welcoming me to your school and being so friendly and helpful. I particularly want to thank the school council and those in Year 6 who gave up their lunchtime to talk to me. You gave me a lot of useful information about your school and I had a very enjoyable time. Now I want to share with you what I found out in the two days I was with you all.

The school gives you a satisfactory education and it is improving. There are some good things about its work. You have a good headteacher who has already improved things like your behaviour and school meals. I know you enjoy school, behave well and want to help each other. Older pupils are doing a great job helping younger members to get better at sports and the school council is keen to develop the grounds near the school. It's really good to see how all the staff, governors, pupils and the village are working together as a community to develop this area. You have a good understanding of how to keep fit, healthy and safe. All of you I spoke to said how much you enjoy the healthy school meals. They are excellent and you are very lucky to have such an outstanding cook. While most of you are getting better at your work and making satisfactory progress, those who find their learning a bit difficult are making really good progress because of the extra help you receive. Adults in the school take good care of you all and you make good progress in your personal development. I was pleased to see happy smiley faces in the Reception class.

The standards you reach in school are getting better, but they are not high enough yet for most of you, especially in writing, reading and mathematics. I have asked the school to make sure that all lessons make you think hard and involve you more, like the independent learning sessions you all enjoy. Some of you will receive harder work to achieve higher levels. The school will check more closely in lessons about how well you are doing. You can help by always trying your best and attending school regularly, as this is very important. The school would like to give those of you in the Reception class more exciting lessons with a bigger space for you to play more together with things like the sand and water.

Good luck everybody

Yours sincerely

Sheila Mawer

Lead inspector