

St Bridget's C of E School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	112296
Local Authority	Cumbria
Inspection number	325569
Inspection dates	7–8 October 2008
Reporting inspector	Dave Byrne

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	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	62
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 Jim Hewittson
Headteacher	Mrs Elizabeth Highton
Date of previous school inspection	1 October 2005
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Main Street Parton Whitehaven Cumbria CA28 6NY
Telephone number	01946 852654
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector

Description of the school

This is a small school located in a relatively isolated coastal village. Many families in the village go back for many generations. There is Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) provision comprising a maintained Nursery and children in a mixed Reception and Key Stage 1 class. All pupils are of White British ethnicity. The school serves an area with high levels of deprivation. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is well above average. An above average percentage of pupils is identified with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. In some year groups, as many as half of the pupils are identified as such. The school is accredited with the Local Authority Kite Mark for Early Years Education.

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 excellent school which provides an outstanding quality of care and education. It is a much valued part of its community and rated highly by all who know it. It successfully overcomes the considerable hurdles to learning of many pupils. The school's great success is achieved as a result of excellent leadership, high quality teaching, an inspiring curriculum and the staff's determination to give pupils as good an education as possible.

Pupils' achievement is excellent. Children start the EYFS with skills that are generally well below what is typical for their age. They get off to a good start in the Nursery and Reception. Teacher assessments indicate that by the end of Year 2, pupils reach challenging targets for their performance in reading, writing and mathematics. Results remain below average because many pupils initially struggle with the culture of learning. Nevertheless, by the end of Year 4, pupils have settled down and consolidated the basic academic and personal skills required to learn. As a result, progress accelerates rapidly. By the end of Year 6, pupils reach the challenging targets set for them. Test results typically rise to being broadly average in English, mathematics and science. The more able pupils and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities reach the standards expected of them. The Year 6 group in 2008 did very well with everyone reaching national expectations for their age.

Pupils love school life. The outstanding levels of care and support bring out the pupils' confidence to express themselves and to explore all the school has to offer. All the required procedures with regard to safeguarding pupils are fully met. Behaviour is excellent at all times and pupils' capacity to care for and put others first is immense. Pupils are convinced that eating properly and taking exercise is good for them and most do their best to practice what they preach. Staff are dedicated to supporting the needs of every individual. Pupils' views are very much valued and staff spend a lot of time talking with them. The whole family matters in this school; parents and carers are encouraged to get involved in their children's education. It is, therefore, no surprise that parents are unanimous in their support of the school.

One of the key reasons why pupils achieve so well is the very high quality curriculum. It is designed to broaden the pupil's understanding of the wider world and to lift ambitions for their future. The school has established an excellent range of initiatives designed to broaden the pupils' understanding of the wider world. Regular visits complement lessons, for example to Smithills Hall to support studies on history. In addition, pupils in Key Stage 2 benefit annually from a carefully planned residential visit. In recent years, places such as York, Edinburgh and Paris have been visited. Good links with a locally based city law firm have enabled a visit to London, so that pupils can gain an insight into different ways of living.

The outstanding leadership of the headteacher has created a dedicated team of staff totally committed to doing the best for their pupils. New ideas are always being considered to push achievement even higher. The school fully recognises its strengths and weaknesses, but the formal recording of the findings of self-evaluation does not do it justice. The school is much better than it was at the last inspection. It gets the best from its budget and has an excellent capacity to improve further.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

The EYFS is well managed. It is effective and there are some particularly strong features in the Nursery. Children who start in Nursery are often at a much earlier stage of learning and personal development than is typical for their age. As a result of good teaching, and the excellent contribution of teaching assistants, children make good progress in all areas of learning. Weaknesses in the accommodation limit aspects of children's development related to outdoor learning, but significant improvements are imminent. Very good links with parents and carers ensure the children feel very secure and happy in school. Children are well prepared for the next stage in their learning and transition arrangements are very carefully planned.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the formal recording of the school's self-evaluation.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

Achievement is excellent when the very low starting points of many pupils are considered.

All national data needs to be treated with extreme caution as pupil numbers are very small. Children start school in the EYFS with levels of development that are often well below those typical for their age. Despite good progress, standards by the start of Year 1 are generally lower than expected for their age. In many cases the very low level of spoken English holds back the standards reached by the end of Year 2. Here, despite good progress in Years 1 and 2, standards are typically below national average.

As pupils mature the impact of the very good teaching of basic skills that they receive, coupled with excellent support for those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, starts to have an effect. By the time pupils reach Year 4, they have developed the skills and personal confidence necessary to push on with their learning and their progress accelerates rapidly. By the end of Year 6 all pupils, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, reach, and many exceed, challenging targets in reading, writing and mathematics. Standards at Year 6 are typically average, but can vary according to the nature of the group. In 2008, all Year 6 pupils gained the standard expected for their age. Pupils also excel in sport. Commendable success has been gained in various local events for example, in winning a hockey tournament competing against much larger schools.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Excellent relationships pervade the school. Pupils' behaviour is outstanding and their attitudes to other people, as well as to their work, are highly impressive. Pupils love learning anything new, whether it is how to write a story, learning to solve mathematical problems or in carefully following recipes to make hotpot and apple crumble! Attendance is broadly average, being lowered by those who take holidays during term time. Pupils are convincing in their knowledge about the choices required to stay safe, fit and healthy; most do their best to follow their beliefs. Pupils' spiritual, social and moral development is excellent. Cultural development is good. Pupils have an excellent understanding of their immediate culture but are less secure than they could be in their understanding of the diversity of modern society. Older pupils

naturally help younger ones. Playground 'PALS' take their roles very seriously and wear their caps with pride. Pupils are well prepared for their next stage of education.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 1

Teachers and teaching assistants form a highly skilled team. High expectations are made for academic achievement and great attention is given to nurturing pupils' confidence. It is no surprise, therefore to find that pupils' achievement is excellent. All staff support each other in their determination to provide all pupils with the best possible education. Staff know each pupil very well and understand their home circumstances and how they think. As a result, teaching is adapted very well to make sure that all individuals can achieve their potential. Pupils with learning difficulties are catered for very well. Staff constantly strive for perfection. At times, they cast off conventions and make adventurous approaches to lessons. This enlivens learning. The introduction of ability groups for literacy and numeracy is boosting progress and enabling staff to get to grips with the needs of each pupil. Where gaps appear in the shared skills of the small teaching team excellent contributions by visiting teachers make sure that pupils do not miss out. This is exemplified by the outstanding teaching provided by a music specialist and the invaluable contributions of sports coaches.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

Pupils benefit from a lively and exciting curriculum. It successfully broadens the very narrow experience many pupils have of the wider world. It also helps them to develop important life skills such as learning how to cook. Excellent use of educational visits makes learning fun and meaningful; for example going to Keswick as part of geography and to Smithills Hall to support a study of the Tudors in history. Such visits are carefully planned to make learning interesting and to encourage the development of the essential basic skills of literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT). Close links with other schools enable pupils to taste a wide variety of sports and a good link with a nearby high school has made French accessible to all pupils in Key Stage 2. Pupils benefit from many opportunities to develop their performance skills, for example, by participating in adaptations of Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* and giving musical performances for others. In order to raise pupils' ambitions, a city law firm took older pupils to London to see how people in a completely different setting from their own live. An excellent range of annual residential visits to places farther afield benefits all in Key Stage 2.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Pupils are extremely well cared for. Their emotional and personal development has a very high priority in all that the school does. At all times, pupils are safe and secure and procedures to safeguard them are fully in place. It is because pupils feel safe, secure and confident to 'have a go' in lessons that they overcome the barriers many face in learning. Pupils with learning difficulties receive excellent support, often from dedicated teaching assistants. As a result, these pupils do extremely well both academically and in terms of personal development. A skilled learning mentor plays a vital part in supporting vulnerable families so that all pupils can

benefit by being fully included in school life. Staff constantly check the academic progress of each pupil and have very effective, yet simple systems to record it. Effective action is taken when lack of progress is identified. Excellent links with parents and carers successfully encourage their involvement in their children's education.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

The headteacher is an inspirational leader. The needs of the area the school serves are comprehensively understood and the head relates very well to parents and the community. Nothing is too much where the pupils are concerned. The setting of challenging academic targets has contributed to a raising of expectations, matched by pupils' excellent level of achievement. The best is squeezed out of the accommodation, much of which is difficult to manage, and the skills of staff are constantly being upgraded to meet new challenges. A very strong team of staff has been created, all of whom share the same determination to do their best for the pupils. The school values its contribution to community cohesion and is currently seeking ways of making links between pupils in Parton and children from different cultural backgrounds. The role of the governing body has improved since the last inspection. Governors now have a more independent view of the school's performance. Although staff and governors know the school's strengths and weaknesses very well, these are not formally recorded as well as they could be.

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?	2
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?	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?	1
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
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	2
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	3
The behaviour of learners	1
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1
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	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	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**

9 October 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Bridget's C of E School, Cumbria, CA28 6NY

It was a privilege to recently spend two days in your school. You are very proud of your school and have every right to be. It is outstanding. You have very caring teachers and support staff who work tirelessly to make lessons enjoyable and fun. As a result, you all make really big improvements in your understanding of English, mathematics and science in your time in school. Just as importantly, you also learn how to treat others with respect and work as part of a team. Your behaviour is excellent and it was very impressive to see how hard you work and how much you enjoy lessons. The way that you talk so knowledgeably about the importance of eating sensibly, taking exercise and keeping safe gives me hope that you will have long and happy lives.

You are very lucky to be able to go on so many visits and trips. I would have given anything at your age to have been able to visit London or Paris! The world is yours to explore when you grow older and your school is giving you a great insight into the lives of others. Being able to take part in plays such as Romeo and Juliet and performing musical instruments in front of others are great experiences to have.

Your headteacher and staff form an excellent team. Together they make sure you are always safe and cared for. Nothing is too much for them and it was a delight to see how much they listened to your views – even when one of you preferred to play soccer than carry on being a playground helper!

There is so much that is good about your school and very little that can be improved. I have asked the school to improve one thing, and that is the way it records how well it is doing. Maybe you can help your teachers in thinking about what is best in the school and what could be done to make it even better.

I am sure you will all continue to enjoy learning and continue to be caring, confident people. Congratulations to you all and best wishes for the future.

Dave Byrne

Lead inspector