

Borrowdale Church of England Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	112333
Local Authority	Cumbria
Inspection number	325581
Inspection date	4 June 2009
Reporting inspector	Susan Brown HMI

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 aided
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	43
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 Alan Leyland
Headteacher	Mrs Helen Richardson
Date of previous school inspection	8 March 2006
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Stonethwaite Keswick Cumbria CA12 5XG
Telephone number	01768 777686

Age group	3–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors of Schools and one additional inspector.

Description of the school

Borrowdale Primary is a very small rural school situated in Stonethwaite at the head of the Borrowdale Valley. Pupils are drawn from a wide catchment area within the surrounding valleys and some travel from Keswick, seven miles away. The local community is widely spread out and some children live in remote farms and isolated cottages. Year groups are very small, ranging from two to eight, and pupils are taught in mixed-age classes.

The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is well below the national average. Almost all pupils are White British and there are no pupils learning English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities has increased since the last inspection and is now above average. The proportion of pupils entering the school mid-way through their school career is above average.

The school currently holds several awards including: Healthy Schools and Activemark.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Borrowdale Primary is a good school which plays an important role in the life of its local community. It has established a very effective partnership between pupils, staff, governors, the local community and other agencies and schools. This makes a significant contribution to the outstanding personal development and well-being of its pupils, the good progress they make and the above average standards they reach by the time they leave the school. Parents are overwhelmingly supportive of the school. One parent wrote, 'It is more like a family than a school' and another summed up the views of many by writing, 'It is a very special little school where children's individual needs are catered for'.

Standards are above average and all pupils make good progress from their individual starting points. In such a small school, standards at the end of each key stage can vary greatly from year-to-year and it can be misleading to compare the school's published results with national data. Pupils' levels of ability on entry to the Nursery vary but their personal and communication skills are often slightly below those typical for their age. They make good and steady progress as they move through the school. At the end of Year 6, almost all pupils reach the expected Level 4 in English, mathematics and science and many reach the higher Level 5. However, fewer do so in writing than in reading and the other subjects. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make equally good progress. Teachers plan work that is well matched to their needs and they are well supported by teaching assistants so that they experience success and grow in confidence.

Good teaching contributes to both pupils' academic progress and their personal development. Staff know their pupils well and generally have high expectations of them. They give them time to think things through and to persevere with tasks that they are finding challenging. They help them to articulate their ideas and clarify their understanding. Teachers mark pupils work regularly and provide praise and encouragement. They also identify how a piece of work could be improved. They provide some, but not enough opportunities for pupils to redraft a piece of work or improve specific writing skills in a new piece of work. Furthermore, expectations are not always sufficiently high when pupils are writing in other subjects.

The care guidance and support pupils receive from the school is outstanding. They enjoy school, attend regularly, have extremely positive attitudes to learning, work well together and behave exceptionally well. They understand how to stay fit and healthy and say that they feel safe in school. The broad and interesting curriculum makes the most of the school's rural location and compensates for any potential isolation. Good links with a multi-ethnic and multi-faith city school ensure that pupils can experience and begin to understand the diversity of life of Britain.

Leadership and management of the school are good. Many members of staff are relatively new to the school but the headteacher and governing body have secured a sense of common purpose. Systems to monitor standards, teaching and learning contribute to a generally accurate school self-evaluation. In turn, this contributes to a clear picture of what is needed to move the school forward. As a result, the school has made good progress since the last inspection. In particular, the areas for improvement identified by the last inspection have been tackled successfully. This track record and the school's current good performance demonstrate a good capacity to improve further. However, the school's monitoring procedures have not always identified that expectations of pupils' writing in subjects other than English are not consistently high enough.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Provision for Nursery and Reception pupils is effective. Since the last inspection, all aspects of planning and provision have been thoroughly reviewed and significant improvements made. The children are taught in small year groups in the morning and then Reception pupils are integrated with pupils in Key Stage 1 in the afternoon. Staff work well together and use their very good knowledge of every child to devise stimulating activities indoors and out. Children make good progress in relation to their starting points. Levels of ability on entry vary considerably from year to year and across the areas of learning. The children's personal and language skills are often slightly less well developed than is typical for most children of this age. They leave Reception with skills that are average although writing skills are slightly less well developed.

The curriculum provides a good balance between child-chosen and adult-led activities. Teaching is good and staff are particularly skilful at extending language and thinking skills as they work alongside children during independent activities. Their gentle encouragement raises children's confidence and self-esteem. Their emphasis on courtesy is successful. Phonics are taught very effectively and children learn new sounds and their link to letters at an appropriate level and pace. Opportunities for writing are occasionally missed because they are not consistently planned as an aspect of most activities. The children make good progress in their personal development. They cooperate well with adults and other children. The school's warm family atmosphere welcomes each child as an individual. There are very effective procedures to ensure a smooth transition from home into Nursery and then on into Key Stage 1. Relationships with parents are excellent and they are given effective guidance on supporting their children's education. There are very good procedures in place to keep children safe and secure and ensure their welfare.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the quality of pupils' writing by ensuring that:
- children in the Early Years Foundation Stage have daily, ongoing opportunities for writing across all areas of learning
- when teachers have identified how a piece of writing could be improved, pupils have opportunities to redraft their work or practice the particular skills they need to master in a new piece of work.
- Establish consistently high expectations of pupils' writing across all subject areas and then carry out rigorous monitoring to ensure that these are maintained.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Standards are above average and achievement is good. Pupils make good progress in relation to their starting points and in doing so they meet challenging targets. In such a small school pupils' standards can vary greatly from year-to-year depending upon the make-up of the cohort, including the length of time each pupil has been in the school and the proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

Pupils enter Key Stage 1 with average standards. They make good progress and, by the end of Year 2, are reaching standards that are slightly above the national average in reading, writing and mathematics. They continue to make good progress in Key Stage 2 with almost all pupils

reaching at least the expected levels in English, mathematics and science and many reach the higher Level 5. However, fewer pupils reach the higher Level 5 in writing. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress towards the targets in their individual education plans.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils' personal development and well-being, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, are outstanding. Their enjoyment of, and enthusiasm for, school is demonstrated in their positive attitudes, excellent behaviour and pride in their work. The attendance of most pupils is above average. They have a very secure understanding of healthy lifestyles as shown by the high take-up of healthy school meals and sporting opportunities across all age groups. As one pupil commented 'we have opportunities from rounders to windsurfing!' Pupils feel safe in school because they are well trained in everyday and specific safety measures and, along with staff, are generally vigilant. They say there is no bullying. They are encouraged to discuss their feelings. They welcome the use of 'worry boxes' and recognise that staff are very approachable and ready to help when any difficulties arise. The elected school council is active and its views are listened to and acted upon but the school is small enough for the views and opinions of all pupils to be sought and heard.

Pupils are aware and tolerant of individual differences. They say that staff are good at working with pupils who find learning more difficult than others. They also recognise the school's encouragement of and provision for gifted and talented pupils. They enjoy taking on responsibilities within the school and are very active within the local community, participating in activities as diverse as picking up litter and the local shepherds' meet. They appreciate the diversity of British culture and are keen to engage with pupils from a much larger, multi-ethnic city school. Pupils communicate by letter and email as well as visiting each other during residential experiences. Pupils work exceptionally well together and express themselves passionately and articulately. This, combined with above average basic skills, prepares them extremely well for secondary school education.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching is good. Pupils make good progress and have very positive attitudes to learning. Teachers' subject knowledge is generally good and this, together with their knowledge of individual pupils, enables them to match work closely to their needs and interests despite the wide range of ages and abilities in each class. They generally have high expectations of pupils and set challenging tasks to which pupils respond positively. A group of younger pupils listened carefully to the description of the characteristics of a hexagon, identified it and then proceeded with determination and perseverance to make the shape on a geoboard with an elastic band. Teachers allow pupils time to think. A group of older pupils came up with several explanations for why they knew that it would not be easy to divide 125 equally by 6. The composition of teaching groups changes throughout the day in a well planned and orderly manner. These flexible arrangements allow the school to make the best use of resources. Staff and pupils are familiar with these routines and take them in their stride. The quality of both teaching and learning remains high.

Pupils know what they are good at and what they need to do to improve. Their self-evaluations are honest and insightful. Home-school target books ensure that parents are also aware of the next steps their children need to take. Very effective deployment of teaching assistants enables the specific needs of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities to be fully met. They ensure that pupils understand what they have to do, helping them to remain on task and experience success. This boosts their self-esteem and confidence to tackle future challenges.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is good. It fulfils all statutory requirements and is enriched with an outstanding range of creative, first-hand experiences and a varied programme of visits and visitors. The curriculum makes a significant contribution to all pupils' good achievement and outstanding personal development and well-being. Pupils speak with knowledge and enthusiasm about the interesting and exciting activities offered. They particularly enjoy the school's 'theme weeks' and actually raised funds to enhance resources for the last one which focused on design and technology.

Provision for literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology is good. The curriculum is very responsive to local needs. Teachers make very good use of the school grounds, the local area and community events and projects to initiate and support learning. Links with a multi-ethnic and multi-faith city school allow pupils in both schools to develop an understanding of a very different locality and to experience time in a school very different to their own. The range of after-school clubs changes in response to feedback from pupils and their changing interests. The school has developed strong partnerships with local schools and networks and makes good use of these for example to provide specialist sports coaching.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Care, guidance and support are outstanding both pastorally and academically. The school is a friendly, supportive and safe environment for pupils. There are very effective systems in place to keep pupils safe, secure and happy. Child protection, safeguarding and risk assessments are regularly reviewed and staff training is appropriately updated. The school knows its pupils extremely well and assesses their needs accurately. Systems for tracking pupils' progress enable all staff to access and use performance information easily. As a result, pupils receive well-targeted additional support when required and the school is able to review provision and ensure progress is being made. Pupils work effectively towards personalised learning targets.

Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are identified early and the school works very well with outside agencies to ensure that they receive the correct support and resources. The needs of vulnerable pupils are exceptionally well met. Gifted and talented pupils are also given appropriate opportunities. Relationships with parents, who appreciate the school's excellent communication and genuine partnership, are a strength of the school.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good. The vision and energy of the headteacher, together with effective support and challenge from the governing body, have brought about further improvements in the school since the last inspection.

There have been significant changes in staffing in recent years. Nevertheless, there is a sense of common purpose and shared priorities that result in pupils reaching high standards both in their learning and their personal development. All pupils are valued equally and all make good progress, particularly those who have encountered difficulties previously. The school works extremely effectively with its partners to broaden the curriculum it provides for pupils and to support those with specific needs. Furthermore, its partnership work enables the school to make a strong contribution to promoting community cohesion particularly at a local and national level.

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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?	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?	2
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	2
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?	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	1
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1

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	2
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**

5 June 2009

Dear Children

Inspection of Borrowdale CofE Primary School, Cumbria, CA12 5XG

Thank you so much for all the help that you gave to me and Mrs Elton when we came to inspect your school last week. We really enjoyed meeting you and listening to what you had to tell us. You expressed your views clearly and confidently. You obviously enjoy school. You will not be surprised to hear that we judged your school to be a good one because that is what you and your parents told us!

There are several features of your school that are outstanding. We were particularly impressed by:

- your exemplary behaviour
- your understanding of how to stay fit and healthy
- the ways in which staff care for you and help you with your work if you are having difficulties
- the interesting activities that Mrs Richardson and the staff provide for, such as visiting the school in Newcastle and welcoming its pupils when they come to see you.

In your work you make good progress and achieve above average standards. We have asked the headteacher, staff and governors to:

- make sure that younger children have lots of opportunities for, and reasons to, write
- provide older children with opportunities to redraft work and improve their writing skills
- have high expectations of your writing in all subjects.

Please thank your parents for returning the questionnaire they received.

With very best wishes for your future

Yours faithfully

Susan Brown

Her Majesty's Inspector