

Castle Carrock School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	112422
Local Authority	Cumbria
Inspection number	325603
Inspection dates	17–18 March 2009
Reporting inspector	Carole Cressey

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	Foundation
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	110
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 James Francis
Headteacher	Mr Chris Marsh
Date of previous school inspection	15 June 2006
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Castle Carrock Brampton Cumbria CA8 9LU
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Age group	3–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

The school is smaller than the average primary school and a significant number of the pupils travel to school from the surrounding area. It has Early Years Foundation Stage in a Reception and Nursery Class. Most of the pupils come from advantaged backgrounds. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is well below average as is the proportion in receipt of free school meals. There is a breakfast club, after-school care and holiday provision.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a good school. The leadership of the headteacher is particularly good. His quiet warmth, clear sense of direction and high level of professionalism have galvanised all connected with the school to deliver very good improvements since the last inspection. As a result much of the school's work is now outstanding.

The school's success can be seen by its popularity in the local community and the number of pupils who attend the school from outside the immediate catchment area. An overwhelming majority of parents speak very highly of the school and their confidence is well placed. The following comment is typical of many, 'this is a happy school - and I feel that even though he doesn't know it my son is really rather privileged. Full marks all round!'

The school is making a very strong contribution to community cohesion. Pupils learn to respect themselves and others and become successful learners who are able to confidently take their place in the 21st Century. Pupils have a very good understanding of cultures and faiths different from their own and recognise the importance of having respect and tolerance for everyone. The school very effectively promotes pupils' love of learning, as well as their understanding of how to stay healthy, keep themselves and others safe. They are reliable, caring members of their school, local, national and global community and are exceptionally well equipped for the next stage of their education.

Leadership rigorously monitors all aspects of the school's provision. This ensures that teaching is consistently good and often outstanding and care, along with a very stimulating and rich curriculum, is of a very high quality. The learning environment is imaginatively and carefully planned to ensure that in no way is pupils' education limited by the size and geographical remoteness of the school. Pupils are constantly immersed in a boundless range of rich and exciting experiences both in and out of the classroom. Different teaching styles and resources engage the interest of pupils and accelerates progress. Classrooms, corridors, shared areas and excellent outdoor facilities create an exciting and challenging environment for pupils to explore.

Pupils flourish in this carefully planned environment. Children start in the Nursery with levels of development that are typical for their age. All pupils work very hard and achieve well. By Year 2 pupils are reaching standards which are above average. The school has worked hard to ensure that the momentum is maintained in Key Stage 2, especially in writing and consequently pupils achieve well. The school reaches its challenging targets for pupils at the end of Key Stage 2. By Year 6 standards are well above average. In 2008 the provisional national test results show, almost every pupil reached the standard expected for their age in reading, writing, mathematics and science with an above average proportion exceeding the expected standard of Level 4.

Assessment and recording systems provide teachers and managers with a detailed picture of levels of attainment and information to plan future learning needs. However, assessment and tracking systems do not provide leadership with a sufficiently detailed overview of standards across the school and in comparison with standards in schools nationally so that action can be taken to identify where standards can be even better.

The school has made excellent progress since the previous inspection; the success of its actions also shows that the school has good potential to make further improvements. The school has a clear insight into its strengths and weaknesses and is constantly looking for new challenges to enhance the education of its pupils. It is very well placed to continue to improve.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children start school with levels of development which are typical for their ages. Leadership and management are good resulting in good teaching and excellent levels of care and welfare. Children enjoy learning and make good progress and by the time children move into Year 1 many reach average standards and a significant number exceed this level. Very good emphasis is placed on helping children to learn to be kind and considerate to each other. The indoor and outdoor environments provide a range of good activities and tasks to extend children's learning and promote their personal and social development. However, some tasks are too directed by adults and children's own creativity and spontaneity is not allowed to flourish enough. The basic skills of speaking, listening, reading, writing and number are given a high priority. With increasing confidence every child in the Reception class is reading simple stories and writing sentences, many with an awareness of simple punctuation. Staff use the information from observations to pinpoint each child's progress and carefully identify the next steps in learning. Children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are quickly identified and receive exceptionally sensitive support enabling them to take a full part as possible in the school community.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure assessment systems provide leadership with a clear overview of standards across the school and in relation to national standards.
- Ensure that children in the Early Years Foundation Stage have sufficient opportunities to develop their own ideas and spontaneity especially in creative activities.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils achieve well and standards are well above average. The good start pupils receive in the Early Years Foundation Stage continues in Key Stage 1. Pupils achieve well in Years 1 and 2 and in the 2008 teacher assessments at the end of Year 2 standards were above average in reading, writing and mathematics. In the present Year 2 standards are similarly above average. Pupils continue to work hard in Key Stage 2 and good progress is maintained. Standards in reading are especially high. In the latest provisional results for Year 6 pupils in 2008 almost every pupil reached the expected level and almost 80% reached the higher level. As a result of very well targeted intervention standards in writing across the school have improved since the previous inspection and in the latest tests over 80% of pupils reached the expected level in writing and almost 30% reached the higher levels. This is higher than results nationally. Every pupil reached the expected level in mathematics and science and well over half the pupils achieved the higher levels. Most pupils in the current Year 6 are working at the expected level in reading, writing, mathematics and science and almost half are already working at the higher level. Overall standards are well above average and the school is on course to meet its challenging targets. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make very good progress towards the targets set for their learning and often reach the expected levels for their ages.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Personal development, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. Pupils are exceptionally polite, friendly, well behaved and confident. Attendance is good because pupils enjoy school. They show considerable enthusiasm in their lessons and are always eager to share ideas and or collaborate on the many challenging tasks and activities available to them. Pupils have an excellent awareness of what it means to be responsible citizens. The school councillors are very pleased with their role in school and pupils are especially proud of setting up the eco committee. Pupils make a real contribution to the life of their local community, including taking part in the annual carnival and collecting considerable amounts of money for charities. They have a very good understanding of cultures and faiths different from their own and recognise the importance of having respect and tolerance for everyone. They are exceptionally well aware of the benefits of healthy eating and physical activity and know how to keep safe. Being healthy and safe in this school has high priority amongst pupils. They demonstrate this in many ways including daily vigorous laps around the school's grounds, very energetic break-times using the excellent adventure playground, and their participation in a range of competitive games. Pupils naturally choose very healthy options at break-times and lunchtime. Pupils are vehement that bullying is not tolerated in their school. By the time pupils leave the school they are extremely well equipped to take advantage of the next stages in their education.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching is good with outstanding features. Relationships are excellent and pupils respond positively to teachers' high expectations of their behaviour and work. Lessons are peppered with good humour and there is a feeling that learning is a shared experience between teacher and pupils. Lessons are well planned with a good range of activities and learning styles to suit different learning needs. This has been especially successful in raising standards in writing across the school and in particular for engaging the interests of reluctant boys. The use of 'mind mapping' information and communication technology (ICT), exciting topics, lots of learning out of doors and a wide range of visits grasps the interest of boys and girls and brings relevance and enjoyment to learning. Pupils are confident in having a go even if the task or the question is extremely challenging. Pupils know that being wrong is just another way of learning in this supportive school. High quality displays and individual targets remind pupils of how to be successful learners. Pupils themselves speak of how valuable these are and how the careful marking of their work helps them to improve. The assessment of pupils' learning is good. The new assessment systems being trialled are especially effective in highlighting even more precisely than before where there are gaps in pupils' learning or where pupils need extra challenge to move onto the next higher level of learning. The school is very highly praised by parents and works very well with them to involve them in their children's work.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The excellent curriculum is vibrant, varied and adapted extremely well to suit the needs of pupils and their families in a remote rural community. An excellent programme of social and

health education provides the pupils with the necessary tools to develop personal safety, care and healthy living. Wherever possible the curriculum is planned around exciting topics that develop pupils' skills, knowledge and understanding of subjects and ideas as well as promoting enquiring young minds. The programme for learning out doors provides pupils with excellent opportunities to develop a very positive attitude to challenge and adventure. Out of school clubs, visits and visitors to school abound, enriching pupils' learning and personal skills. Citizenship is promoted very effectively through a wide range of opportunities for pupils to immerse themselves in the culture of other countries. Links with European, African and Asian schools, the learning of two foreign languages, their religious education lessons and well planned visits and visitors gives pupils an understanding of, and respect for, people different from themselves. Residential trips are planned so that pupils can meet pupils from other faiths and traditions. This vibrant curriculum is highly successful in equipping pupils very well for their future role as responsible citizens and in promoting their economic well-being.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

The school provides high levels of care for its pupils. Procedures for safeguarding pupils' welfare, health and safety are in line with statutory requirements. Excellent support is available for pupils who learn at different rates, who are timid, have complex learning needs or who are vulnerable because of personal circumstances. Working with parents, carers and outside agencies, including the local church and secondary schools, all pupils in this caring school thrive and make good progress.

Pupils who have learning difficulties or other barriers to making progress are supported very well by the teaching assistants either in small groups or in whole- class lessons. As a result they are able to take a full part in all the school has to offer. The guidance given to pupils about what they should do to improve is excellent. Targets are clearly written and are in an interesting eye catching form which pupils can readily refer to and understand easily.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Determined and clearly focused leadership and management give the school a very strong sense of purpose and provides pupils with self-confidence and the skills to be successful learners. Leadership of the headteacher is particularly good. He has developed a tangible team spirit among the staff and all are valued and encouraged to develop and use their own unique skills to promote pupils' learning and well-being. Assessments, test results, the quality of the teaching and learning and the curriculum are all monitored and evaluated to bring about improvements to ensure that pupils' learning is exciting and relevant and that good progress and standards are maintained throughout the school. Strategies to improve writing, since the previous inspection have been particularly successful in raising standards in English. Leadership has a very clear understanding of each pupil's progress through the schools tracking systems. However, the systems do not provide leadership with a clear enough picture of standards across the school in each year group and in relation to national standards. Governors have a clear understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses and give good quality support and guidance using their own many skills to the benefit of the school. The school makes a good contribution to community cohesion. It gives considerable thought to the effectiveness of a number of strategies to promote pupils' awareness of their own and the wider global community.

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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?	2
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	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?	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?	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**

19 March 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Castle Carrock School, Cumbria, CA8 9LU

Thank you so much for being so friendly and welcoming when I visited your school a short while ago. I really enjoyed talking to you. Do you remember you told me that you thought your school was really good? I am pleased to tell you that I agree with you. It is a good school with some outstanding features. I am also pleased to say that your parents and carers agree. Here are some of the things I especially liked about your school.

- It was so good to see how very well behaved and polite you are. I was especially pleased to see how much you enjoy your lessons and how eager you all are to learn new things.
- I could see by the work in your books and displays around the school that you are all doing so well in reading, writing, mathematics and science. I was especially pleased to see how much your writing has improved. I think that is because you have such interesting things to write about.
- You work hard in lessons and you know how to improve your work. I especially liked the way you keep looking at your targets to check your work.
- I was also very pleased to see that you are becoming very responsible young citizens who are aware of the importance of respecting other people that have different traditions and religions.
- You know the importance of protecting the environment, eating sensible food and taking lots of exercise, such as running all those laps around your school. Do keep that up because it is so important to staying healthy and happy.

To help you improve even further your school is going to check regularly to see if your standards are the same as those in other schools in England. The school is also going to make sure that in the Reception class children have more freedom to choose their own materials and designs when they are creating pictures and making models.

Do remember to always work hard and learn lots of new and exciting things. I hope you will continue to enjoy school so that you become happy and successful adults.

Yours sincerely

Carole Cressey

Lead inspector