

Longtown Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	133387
Local Authority	Cumbria
Inspection number	328699
Inspection dates	3–4 February 2009
Reporting inspector	John Heap

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)	201
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 Elizabeth Harrison
Headteacher	Mr Paul Fussell
Date of previous school inspection	27 November 2007
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Mary Street Longtown Carlisle Cumbria CA6 5UG
Telephone number	01228 791203
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Age group	3–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This is a smaller than average primary school which serves a mainly White British population. A small proportion of pupils are at the early stages of learning English. The area has average social and economic disadvantage and a below average proportion of pupils are entitled to free school meals. A broadly average number of pupils have learning difficulties and/or disabilities. A very small number of pupils are in the care of the local authority. The school provides for the Early Years Foundation Stage in the maintained Nursery and Reception class. The school has achieved the following awards: Healthy school and Activemark Gold. There have been major staffing changes in recent times, including a new headteacher in September 2008.

Extended provision includes the Pear Tree Nursery and Kidzone settings.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

In accordance with section 13 (5) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school no longer requires significant improvement.

Inspectors agree with the school that it is satisfactory and provides sound value for money. It has satisfactory capacity to make further improvement. Pupils and parents clearly appreciate the school's atmosphere and work. A typical comment was 'I like the way the teachers greet parents and children.'

Pupils' personal development, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is satisfactory. The happy and purposeful atmosphere owes much to pupils' good behaviour and attitudes. There has been a large reduction in the past year of the proportion of pupils who are persistent absentees, because of the school's robust and diligent monitoring of attendance. However, attendance is below the national average despite the school's best efforts to improve matters. Pupils have a good knowledge and understanding of the importance of adopting safe practices and a sound understanding of how to maintain a healthy lifestyle. They are keen to play a role in the school and this is realised through the school council and a range of jobs they do around the school. Pupils are adequately prepared for their future economic well-being.

Pupils' academic achievement is satisfactory. Pupils enter Year 1 with skills and abilities that are broadly average and make satisfactory progress from then to Year 6. The unvalidated results of the 2008 national tests showed a significant improvement in the proportion of pupils gaining the nationally expected Level 4. Pupils' current work shows them to be on target to reach broadly average standards by the end of Year 6. This is better than at the time of the last inspection and there is evidence in all classes of pupils sometimes making good progress in their work. Improvement has been brought about by the better tracking of pupils' progress which helps teachers focus more on individual learners' needs. As a result, pupils' progress is better in lessons. However, there is inconsistent use of the newly introduced tracking systems and this means that the rate of progress is also variable. In particular, not all teachers show a consistent approach to setting pupils learning targets that are challenging. Equally, the improved quality of marking is not yet consistently robust enough in challenging pupils to do their utmost to make good progress. Pupils' writing skills are weaker, particularly those of more able pupils. Pupils with learning disabilities and/or disabilities, those learning English as an additional language and those looked after by the local authority are making satisfactory progress.

Provision in the school is satisfactory. The sound quality of teaching promotes satisfactory learning and progress. The best teaching makes learning come alive and pupils make good progress in these lessons. The satisfactory curriculum provides many opportunities for pupils to develop personal skills. It is less successful at providing opportunities for pupils to use their literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT) skills across other subjects. Pupils receive satisfactory care, guidance and support, which help them to make satisfactory progress and feel safe and secure in school.

Leadership, management and governance are satisfactory. The headteacher, key staff and governors have an accurate view of where the school needs to develop. Pupils' progress is high priority and the school is developing a more systematic approach to challenging pupils so that they achieve well.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Provision is good, and is better than at the time of the last inspection. This is because leadership and management are effective as is the staff teamwork. Children are admitted to the Nursery class with skills and abilities that are below what is typical for their age. The school's data shows that starting points in personal, social, communication, language and mathematical skills are much lower than usual for children of their age. Good and improving teaching in both Nursery and Reception results in children making good progress in all areas of learning. By the end of Reception, most children have the expected level of skills in all areas of learning, except in communication and language skills where a significant number do not reach the goals set for their learning. Personal development is good. Children develop independence and feel secure in this safe and caring environment because they benefit from good daily routines such as self-registering at the start of each day. They behave well, respond to instructions, line up sensibly and play with each other spontaneously. Good planning ensures the learning is balanced between adult-led and child selected activities. Reception children learned to count to ten while those in the Nursery managed the 'pharmacy' set up to encourage their independent learning. Children's welfare is promoted well. Each child is designated a 'key worker' who monitors individual progress using rigorous assessment practices. Child supervision is thorough and communication with parents prompt and effective.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards in writing, particularly for the more able pupils.
- Increase the opportunities for pupils to use their writing, numeracy and ICT skills in the full range of subjects.
- Ensure consistency in the quality of target-setting and marking, so that all pupils are clear about their achievements and the next steps in learning.
- Find ways to further improve attendance.

A small proportion of schools whose overall effectiveness is judged to be satisfactory but have areas of under performance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Standards are average and pupils' achievement is satisfactory. By the end of Year 2, standards in 2008 national were below average in reading, writing and mathematics.

This represents satisfactory progress especially in literacy where pupils start Year 1 with below average skills. Nevertheless, writing standards showed a good improvement on the previous year, whereas reading and mathematics were broadly similar. Standards are lower than average at the higher Level 3. The main reason for this is the excessive use of prepared worksheets which lack challenge and reduce opportunities to develop the full range of writing and mathematics skills. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make satisfactory progress.

By the end of Year 6, results in national tests have been significantly below average over time. However, the unvalidated 2008 results showed a significant improvement on the previous year in all subjects. For example, the proportion of pupils achieving the nationally expected Level 4 increased by 18% in English and science and 31% in mathematics. However, the more able

pupils did less well in writing. School data and inspection evidence gives a similar picture. It is clear from this that pupils are now making at least satisfactory progress. Current school data shows pupils making better progress than formerly and that Year 6 pupils are on course to exceed the targets for 2009. Writing continues to be an area for improvement because there is insufficient writing done in other subjects and weaknesses in basic skills are not corrected early enough. There is excessive use of worksheets. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make satisfactory progress towards their targets.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

Pupils' moral and social development is good. Consequently, behaviour is good and pupils know the difference between right and wrong. Pupils say there is no bullying at this school. Pupils feel safe because they know they can turn to an adult who has a good knowledge of them personally. Pupils recognise the need for rules and routines and follow these well. Pupils' understanding of personal safety includes awareness that 'stranger danger' must also be applied when accessing the Internet. Pupils have a sound knowledge of the value of staying healthy and keeping fit. Pupils generally enjoy lessons. Attendance has improved but is below the national average. Pupils' contribution to the school and local community is satisfactory. The school council gather the views of their classmates, but it is too early to judge the impact of suggestions because of the early stage of development of the council. Reception children benefit from the knowledge that they have a personal buddy to turn to for help. Pupils' improved progress in the key skills of literacy, numeracy and ICT helps them to be adequately prepared for the future.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching and learning are satisfactory. However, where the teaching is good there is evidence that assessment is being used well to challenge pupils. Good teaching was seen in several classes and the main features were: good relationships that motivated the pupils to do their best, good classroom management ensured that pupils were well focused on learning and strong practical work that enthused pupils and accelerated progress. In the satisfactory lessons, opportunities were missed to involve pupils actively in their learning. In one lesson, some of the boys lost concentration and interest when they listened for too long. Although learning is improving across Key Stage 2, pupils' books show that there remain examples of low expectations. This is evident in the excessive use of worksheets and in the occasional lack of rigorous marking to eradicate careless errors in pupils' basic writing skills. Marking is improving but remains inconsistent; the better practice includes clear guidance on what is needed to improve and opportunities that encourage pupils to think about their own progress using simple checks. There are some good examples of pupils self-assessing their work.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum soundly promotes all pupils' personal development through the religious education curriculum, work in assemblies and areas of personal, social and health education and citizenship. The curriculum is adequately enriched through visits and there are two annual

residential experiences. The school provides a satisfactory range of extra-curricular activities including sport, music and a writing club. The curriculum mostly meets the academic needs and interests of all pupils, for example, pupils do a lot of work in mathematics, but they do not learn enough through investigating and problem-solving. Satisfactory planning ensures all subjects are taught regularly. The teaching of French has been introduced. Priority is rightly given to developing literacy and numeracy skills but pupils do not have enough opportunities to use and develop these basic skills, and ICT, across the full curriculum. The school recognises that this is an area for improvement and planning reflects this priority. There is evidence that this is having a positive impact on English standards. The school has deployed a new team to support pupils who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities, those learning English as an additional language and pupils in the care of the local authority. Early indications are that this provision is effective.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Care, guidance and support are satisfactory. Child protection, risk assessments and safeguarding meet requirements. The established routines for the day-to-day management of the school are discharged satisfactorily. Support for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is sensitive and promotes their sound progress, often through activities in class and in other rooms where groups benefit from close adult support. The personalised support for pupils with specific needs ensures they have appropriate resources and are fully involved in the learning process. The monitoring of behaviour and attendance is robust and promotes good behaviour and improving attendance. The rate of persistent absence has been halved and is now below average. Academic guidance is satisfactory. Pupils are set targets that reflect their prior ability and the expectation for the end of the year. Most pupils can quote their targets when asked. In the current Year 6, the targets are challenging and the early signs are that they are achievable. This is a good attempt to systematically reduce the deficit from earlier years.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Since the previous inspection, there have been significant changes. These include a new headteacher, a new senior leadership team and significant support from the local authority. In the short time since that inspection there has been satisfactory improvement and senior leaders and managers know that there is still a way to go. For example, although it is early days, standards are rising because assessment is more robust. Persistent absence and the number of exclusions have been significantly reduced because monitoring is now more rigorous and there are more examples of good teaching and learning because staff are clearer about what pupils can achieve. Consequently, the capacity to improve is satisfactory. Inspectors found that some self-evaluation judgements were over-generous, but senior leaders are very clear and accurate about achievement and standards. School improvement planning has improved because the monitoring accurately identifies the right priorities. The school has soundly evaluated its promotion of community cohesion but the impact is currently limited to establishing stronger links in the local community. Governance is satisfactory. The governing body is supportive and there are signs of greater involvement, including increased training and more monitoring of pupils' attainment and progress. However, at present, the governors are too reliant on the senior leaders for the information they receive.

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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?	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?	3
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?	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?	3
The standards ¹ 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	3

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?	3
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	3
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	3
The attendance of learners	3
The behaviour of learners	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	3
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?	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

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	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?	3
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**

5 February 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Longtown Primary School, Cumbria, CA6 5UG

On behalf of the inspection team, I want to tell you that we thoroughly enjoyed being in your school last week. You generously gave us a warm welcome, treated us with courtesy and provided help and assistance when we needed it. You go to a satisfactory school that is improving.

Here are some of the things we think are strong features of your school:

- the children in Nursery and Reception classes make good progress in their learning, settle to work quickly and enjoy coming to school
- you enjoy school and your parents are pleased that you are there
- the contribution that you make to school, through the school council and helping with the younger ones at playtimes
- your moral and social development is strong and because of this you behave well, know right from wrong and have good relationships with adults and other children
- you are making better progress as you move through the school
- the range of activities that enrich the curriculum and there is a lot of good support for the children who need it
- leaders and managers in your school ensure that you are well cared for.

To improve your school further the staff will ensure that you do even better in your writing. I know that you will want to help by continuing to always do your best work. Staff will also make sure that the marking of your work is the same in all the classes so that you always have a clear picture of how well you are doing and what you need to do to improve further. You will want to help by always following the advice from your teachers and seeking ways to improve what you do. You can also help by attending school regularly, as every lesson can make a difference to you. Finally, you will get more opportunities to use your writing, numeracy and ICT skills in all the subjects that you do.

Good luck for the future and make sure that you continue to enjoy school.

Yours sincerely

John Heap

Lead inspector