

Hensingham Community Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	133726
Local Authority	Cumbria
Inspection number	328737
Inspection dates	18–19 March 2009
Reporting inspector	Gillian Salter-Smith

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	Community
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	206
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 Fiona McMinn
Headteacher	Mr Robin Lacey
Date of previous school inspection	6 June 2006
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Main Street Hensingham Whitehaven Cumbria CA28 8QZ

Age group	3–11
Inspection dates	18–19 March 2009
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

The school is slightly smaller than average and has more girls than boys. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is well above average. Most pupils are of White British origin. Of the small number from other minority ethnic groups, very few are in the early stages of learning English.

An average proportion of pupils have learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Quite a high proportion of pupils join the school at times other than the usual start in Nursery, but only a few pupils leave before the end of Year 6.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Hensingham Primary is a satisfactory and improving school. The good care and support provided help to promote pupils' good personal development. Parents appreciate the quality of the education their children receive. These comments are typical of the response of many parents: 'Hensingham School has a very welcoming and inclusive attitude to both parents and children' and 'Over the past few years I have seen this school develop greatly. I think the school is doing everything it can to make sure that the pupils achieve as much as they can, academic and sporting.'

The school is well on the way to recovering from a turbulent period that followed the previous inspection, particularly with regard to staffing. The headteacher, well supported by governors and staff, has provided strong leadership in bringing about improvements to staffing, pupils' behaviour and attendance. The quality of teaching and learning is increasingly effective, and is currently satisfactory overall. As a result, pupils' progress is accelerating and there is evidence in pupils' current work of improving standards, especially in writing. However, many pupils are still catching up from a legacy of underachievement and have not yet reached their full potential, especially more able pupils. Pupils' achievement therefore is satisfactory, rather than good. From starting points that are below those typical for their age, especially in communication and language development, pupils make satisfactory progress and, by the time pupils leave the school in Year 6, standards are below average in mathematics and science but well below average in English. There are missed opportunities in lessons for well structured talk between pupils about their work. This is holding back pupils' full potential in developing good communication and literacy skills.

Successful improvements in the management of pupils' behaviour, a well planned approach to pupils' personal, social and emotional development and increasingly positive relationships with parents have helped to establish a calm and nurturing environment. Consequently, pupils feel happy, safe and secure and ready to learn. Behaviour is good and pupils enjoy school and apply themselves to tasks in lessons with enthusiasm. They make a good contribution to the school community, taking on responsibilities such as play leaders and school librarianship conscientiously. Pupils have a good understanding of how to stay healthy, which is seen in their commitment to healthy lunches and their enjoyment of the regular fitness sessions. Pupils are satisfactorily prepared for the next stage of their education.

Approaches to self-evaluation are satisfactory and give leaders and governors an understanding of the strengths and areas to improve within the work of the school.

Leaders are aware that the information provided through regular assessment and tracking of pupils' progress is not used consistently enough in all lessons to ensure that more able pupils are fully challenged. Although assessment information is used to identify and tackle the underperformance of some pupils, there is a long gap between the planned reviews of every child's progress. Consequently, underperformance is not always recognised or acted upon swiftly enough.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 3

Children enter the Nursery with skills below levels typical for their age, and many have delayed personal and social development and weak language and literacy skills. Children make satisfactory

progress and standards are still below those expected for their age when they move up into Year 1, especially in language skills.

Relationships between staff and children are good. Children's attitudes and behaviour are frequently praised and children behave well. Children are well cared for and staff ensure that pupils are safe. Children know how to stay safe and healthy. They take great care when moving around the classroom and outdoor areas. They wash their hands after messy play and choose to eat fruit and healthy options at snack time. They make their own choice from different activities and play together harmoniously, joining in activities happily and willingly.

An effective team of staff work well together with an appropriate focus on improving children's language and social skills. Resources, both indoors and outdoors, provide opportunities for imaginative play and language development. Many well structured opportunities for speaking and listening with adults, including role-play, help children to improve their language skills. Early Years Foundation Stage policies and procedures are not yet fully implemented and elements such as the clear identity of a key worker to support every child are not yet in place. Although assessment is undertaken and used to plan learning, the assessment of children when they join the Nursery is not carried out quickly enough, making it difficult to match tasks fully to children's different needs until well on in the school year.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Make better use of assessment information to ensure that more able pupils are fully challenged.
- Provide more opportunities for well structured talk in lessons.
- Review pupils' progress more frequently so that underachievement is picked up and dealt with more quickly.

A small proportion of the 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

Pupils' achievement is satisfactory. From starting points which are below typical for their age in Nursery, pupils make satisfactory progress and improve steadily. The rate of improvement is not yet fast enough, however, and by the time pupils leave Year 6, standards are below average overall and well below average in English. Few pupils reach above average levels. The provisional results for the 2008 Key Stage 1 and 2 national assessments, matched these standards and challenging targets were not met. Work seen in pupils' books and in lessons, and the school's tracking information show that progress for pupils currently in the school is accelerating and older pupils in particular, are beginning to catch up after a period of underachievement.

Differences between girls' and boys' achievement vary from year-to-year. Boys have recently improved their progress in reading and writing, in part because of the increased use of activities and resources likely to interest boys. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are well supported by class teachers and support assistants and they make similar progress to other pupils. The small number of pupils from different minority ethnic backgrounds, including those learning English, achieve well.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' spiritual, moral social and cultural development is good. In their writing in religious education and personal development, pupils show sensitivity towards each other's feelings and an awareness of the importance of offering help to others. Pupils really enjoy opportunities to be involved in the life of the school and feel their views are taken seriously. For example, school councillors have helped to improve the amount of play equipment available at playtimes and they are consulted on how to make other improvements to the school. Pupils keenly support charities of their choice and have good links with the local community. The school is involved with projects such as 'Keeping Whitehaven Clean.' Pupils' behaviour is good in class and around the school. The number of exclusions has reduced significantly. Isolated incidents of bullying are said by pupils to be dealt with effectively by teachers. Pupils know how to keep themselves safe and what they need to do to maintain a healthy lifestyle. For instance, pupils describe school lunches as 'really tasty' and they are able to identify healthy food options. Pupils develop an understanding of financial management and saving through links with a local bank. Participation in 'job fairs' organised by the local college and satisfactory progress in developing basic skills prepare pupils adequately for the next stage of their education and their futures. Pupils are enthusiastic and enjoy being at school. Attendance is satisfactory and has improved since the previous inspection.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching is satisfactory overall but is improving. It is increasingly effective in accelerating pupils' progress. Relationships between staff and pupils are very positive so that pupils enjoy lessons and are eager to learn. Less able pupils, and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, are well supported by teachers and teaching assistants because activities are adapted well to meet the pupils' needs. A consistent approach to planning lessons is evident, making lessons purposeful and enabling pupils to understand how they can succeed. Information on pupils' progress, however, is not always used accurately enough to plan work that is sufficiently challenging for all pupils, especially for more able pupils. Many lessons include a variety of interesting activities so that pupils are keen to participate. However, there are occasions when learning slows down, sometimes because the teacher talks for too long. There are not always enough well structured opportunities for pupils to talk about what they are learning with each other and the teacher.

Teachers' regular marking gives pupils plenty of praise, recognises pupils' achievements and gives helpful guidance. Increasingly, pupils are responding to teachers' comments and making improvements to their work. Pupils' involvement in assessing their own and each other's work is developing but is not yet consistent across the school.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The school provides a satisfactory curriculum. It focuses appropriately on developing basic skills, and provides specific support for those who are further behind than they should be. Because of this, pupils' progress is accelerating. Planned opportunities for pupils to use and

improve their basic skills of literacy and numeracy in other subjects are increasing but are not yet fully developed across all subjects. The school is beginning to provide exciting activities to help motivate the pupils and stimulate interest in learning. A Year 4 history lesson on the Romans was recently brought to life by a visit from a 'Roman centurion' who answered questions in role. The curriculum for Year 1 children contains elements of Early Years Foundation Stage practice within it, ensuring that those children who are still working towards the early learning goals are well supported.

An effective curriculum for personal development is currently focused on improving children's relationships with each other and is resulting in pupils' improved behaviour towards one another. Pupils enjoy taking part in the good range of out of school activities, including those for sport and music.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

The school provides good care and support for its pupils. Arrangements to ensure that pupils are properly safeguarded meet current requirements. Relationships between staff and pupils are very good and pupils know that they can approach staff if they feel they need help. The school works well with parents who feel that their children are safe and well cared for. Parents appreciate the workshops available for them that help to involve them in supporting their children's learning. Effective links with other agencies ensure that pupils who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities receive well targeted support.

Academic guidance is satisfactory. Although assessment information is used to identify and tackle underperformance, there is a long gap between the planned reviews of every child's progress. Consequently, underperformance is not always recognised or acted upon early enough. Pupils have targets to guide their learning in literacy and numeracy. However, these are not used to full effect by teachers to help support learning and raise standards.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The headteacher provides clear direction and leadership is focused on raising standards and improving the quality of provision. Regular monitoring of learning and teaching is helping to identify the right priorities for school improvement. Consequently, there is well focused professional development which contributes to better teaching and learning. Available resources are used wisely.

A satisfactory capacity to improve is evident from the positive changes implemented since the last inspection. These include greater stability of staffing and improved attendance and behaviour. The school has challenging academic targets, but these have not been reached in recent years, although increasingly effective teaching is now accelerating progress towards them. Equality of opportunity is actively promoted, and most pupils, whatever their background or ability, get a fair deal. However, more able pupils' academic needs are not fully taken into account.

Governance is sound. Governors are very supportive and many visit the school regularly to support the classes with which they are linked. They are well informed of the school's performance and take an active role in monitoring the work of the school.

The school is in the early stages of developing a strategic approach to community cohesion. There is an increasingly supportive and cohesive atmosphere among pupils. Pupils develop a tolerance and understanding of each other's cultures and backgrounds. The school encourages pupils who are from different cultural backgrounds to share their celebrations and other important events. Pupils meet other people within their own community from different circumstances through, for example, singing in different local settings. The headteacher's evaluation of community cohesion recognises the need to develop further pupils' understanding of cultures beyond their own across national and global communities.

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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?	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?	3
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	3

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?	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

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**

20 March 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Hensingham Community Primary School, Cumbria, CA28 8QZ

Thank you very much for making the inspection team very welcome in your school. We enjoyed talking to you and seeing you hard at work in lessons. It is important that you know what we found out about your school.

Your school is improving all the time and is providing you with a satisfactory education. You behave well and it was good to see that you enjoy your lessons. We were pleased to hear that you feel safe and secure in school and that you can rely on adults to help you when you need them. We were impressed by how much you know about how to stay healthy and how active you were at playtimes. Your school council is doing a good job to help improve things for you all in your school. The work you have done to 'Keep Whitehaven Tidy' is so important. Well done! Your headteacher, governors and other staff work effectively to help you to feel happy and safe and to improve in your work. We have asked them to think about how they can help you to do even better than you are now in reading, writing and mathematics by:

- making sure that all of you, including the most able, have challenging tasks in lessons
- giving you more opportunities to talk about the work you are doing in lessons
- increasing the number of times that staff check on how well you are making progress so that nobody falls far behind.

You can help by making sure that you carry on coming to school every day that you can. You can try to make corrections to your work when teachers ask you to improve something. Do please keep on enjoying all the extra activities that the school offers to you.

We wish you well and hope that you enjoy the rest of your time at Hensingham Primary School.

Yours sincerely

Mrs Gillian Salter-Smith

Lead inspector