

# Black Combe Junior School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	112160
<b>Local Authority</b>	Cumbria
<b>Inspection number</b>	337854
<b>Inspection dates</b>	7–8 December 2009
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Julie Ward

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

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<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	7–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	116
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Miss Margaret Bratley
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs Helen Webber
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	2 July 2007
<b>School address</b>	Moor Road Millom Cumbria LA18 5DT
<b>Telephone number</b>	01229 772862
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## Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. The inspectors visited six lessons, and visited the Year 5 and 6 pupils who were involved in a local project hosted by a secondary school, and observed their presentation to partner schools. The inspectors held meetings with governors, staff, groups of pupils and parents. They observed the school's work, including the school development plan, the tracking of pupils' progress, provision for those pupils identified as having special educational needs and/or disabilities, minutes of the governors' meetings, all documentation relating to safeguarding and child protection and 46 parental questionnaires.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following:

- how effectively the information from assessments was used to set individual targets to help pupils improve their own learning
- how effectively the governors monitored the work of the school and their awareness of the school's strengths and areas for improvement
- what the school was doing to raise the quality of the teaching to that of the best in order to accelerate the progress the pupils make.

## Information about the school

Black Combe Junior School is smaller than average in size for a junior school and serves a mixed catchment area with pockets of considerable deprivation. The school is part of a 'soft federation' of local schools who share resources to enhance provision for all the pupils in the federated schools. There is a high proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is well above the national average. Most of these needs are related to moderate and severe learning difficulties, or severe medical conditions. Seven pupils have a statement of special educational need. The school holds the Healthy Schools Award, the Activemark and the Inclusion Charter Mark.

**Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate**

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

## Inspection judgements

**Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?**

**2**

**The school's capacity for sustained improvement**

**2**

## Main findings

This is a good school. It provides a caring, supportive and stimulating environment whose pupils say that learning is fun and that they feel safe and very well cared for. The school has continued to improve since the last inspection, retaining and improving its strengths in pupils' personal development and improving the rate of progress in pupils' academic work. The outstanding care, guidance and support provided for pupils means that pupils now achieve well and show excellent attitudes to learning. The attainment of pupils when coming to the school in Year 3 varies from year to year; the attainment of the present group of pupils is below average. Overall, progress to the end of Year 6 is good and sometimes outstanding. Levels of attainment reached in 2009 as validated by external and internal moderation improved, so that pupils reached average attainment from below average starting points. Attainment seen in lessons and in pupils' books confirmed these improvements and attainment is now broadly average. Pupils' skills in using information and communication technology (ICT) for many purposes are very good. The school has accurately prioritised the need to improve writing, particularly for boys.

The quality of teaching is good and sometimes outstanding, though very occasionally pupils are kept too long listening and the pace of the lesson slows. The marking of pupils' work varies between teachers; the best always focus on helping the pupils to see what they need to do to improve, linked to expected targets. The pupils are encouraged to assess their own work and some have 'partner' markers. The headteacher and staff are determined to accelerate pupils' progress to enable them to make the best possible start in their lives. The focus on raising the levels the pupils can attain, including the number reaching higher levels, is beginning to bear fruit. Success is evident. The learning objectives are clear and the pace of most lessons keeps all pupils interested and focused.

Pupils do well because of good, engaging teaching and an exciting curriculum that finds many ways of enriching their lives and broadening their horizons. The wealth of extra-curricular clubs and joint projects with other schools ensures that every pupil can follow their individual interests. As a result of this, progress for all groups of pupils to Year 6 is good, and this includes those who did not begin their schooling at Black Combe, and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities. One parent wrote, 'We only moved to Millom at the start of this school year and cannot believe how our son has excelled since moving to this school.' Pupils' personal development is a strength. The school capitalises on pupils' positive and enthusiastic attitudes to help them to understand their progress better. Parents welcome information about their children's learning, and the vast majority are very pleased indeed with their children's experience

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at the school. Good leadership and management from the headteacher and her team have been key to the school's success. A strong sense of united purpose drives things forward, with middle managers now starting to contribute strongly to improvement, particularly in teaching. Staff enjoy productive links with governors, who in turn have a clear view of what needs to be better. Governors are fully involved in monitoring action plans for improvement. These strengths in leadership and management demonstrate good, sustainable capacity to move the school on even further.

**What does the school need to do to improve further?**

- Improve pupils' attainment further, especially in boys' writing by 2010.
- Raise the quality of teaching to that of the best in order to accelerate the progress made by all pupils by:
  - ensuring that those pupils who could reach the higher levels by the end of Year 6 do so and by
  - ensuring that the high quality of marking to guide pupils on how to improve is consistent across all classes and year groups.

**Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils****2**

Pupils have arrived at the school with attainment that is below average. There are few higher-attaining pupils on entry, but the school is rightly working to ensure that all abilities are being fully challenged. Most groups of pupils in Year 6 have met or exceeded the national expected rate of progress since they were in Year 3. Other year groups follow the same trend. The boys are beginning to make faster progress in their writing, and much of this is due to their increasing enthusiasm for reading new authors and using the website to post reviews on films they have seen at 'film club.' This eagerness was seen in many lessons and in different subjects when pupils worked hard to improve the quality of their writing and spoke with enthusiasm about the topics they were writing about.

Attitudes to learning are highly positive. In a Year 5 and 6 mathematics lesson pupils were exceptionally well motivated and helped each other solve complex problems. The teacher supported the pupils but had high expectations of them to think through the problem. Good learning opportunities were seen in other lessons through pupils' discussions with each other and with staff, when skilful, open-ended questioning enabled them to identify areas for improvement. The development of such independent learning skills is taking place across the school.

Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities progress as well as others because their needs are identified early and strong support ensures good personal and academic development. The school is able to ensure that each pupil makes good progress relative to their starting points.

Pupils' personal development is good. They make outstanding contributions to the school. The school council has identified many potential improvements that have been

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successfully made, for example, suggesting to the council the hedges around the school be cut to help visibility of car drivers and pedestrians. Pupils have a strong commitment to local community projects. For example, older pupils are taking part in a project to bring artists and scientists together to design and make musical instruments using rocks collected from the local quarry. The presentation of their instruments including the musical backing stunned an audience of participating schools and well known musicians and academics. Pupils behave exceptionally well and discuss ideas confidently with adults. Good development of pupils' social, moral, spiritual and cultural understanding results in reflective, considerate attitudes and the good relationships which underpin effective learning. Pupils feel safe, staff know them well and have their best interests at heart. They understand what constitutes a healthy lifestyle and talk knowledgeably about the healthy contents of their lunchboxes and how they benefit from sports and other exercise. Attendance rates are above average, and most pupils come to school regularly. Pupils cooperate well together in groups and when expected to work independently. These attributes, combined with average skills in English and mathematics, and good ICT competence, provide a solid foundation for pupils' future development.

*These are the grades for pupils' outcomes*

<b>Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment <sup>1</sup>	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
<b>The extent to which pupils feel safe</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Pupils' behaviour</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance <sup>1</sup>	2
<b>The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development</b>	<b>2</b>

<sup>1</sup> The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low.

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## How effective is the provision?

Good teaching, an exciting, relevant and rich curriculum, and outstanding care, guidance and support account for the good progress pupils make across the school. Occasionally, lesson pace is slower and some pupils, become restless. Mostly the pace of lessons is brisk and a good variety of activity engages and stimulates pupils from all backgrounds so they develop curiosity and a love of learning. Assessment is good and well focused, oral dialogue between adults and pupils, and between pupils themselves, is often used to evaluate their learning. The best marking is of a high quality and work is checked to make sure it has been completed. Staff track pupils' achievement well, so that most work matches their prior attainment and moves learning forward effectively. Subjects are well integrated, enabling pupils to make the links between ideas. They learn to incorporate ICT into their work in a variety of ways; this is a strength and pupils' ICT skills are well developed. Good teaching in subjects such as music, physical education and art leads to an exceptionally well-rounded experience for all pupils. They talk enthusiastically about extra-curricular activities which add richness to their experience. A good example is the outdoor learning area which includes taking part in 'The Forest School' with the federation schools. Pastoral care is outstanding, pupils feel safe and valued and staff are highly attuned to the needs of vulnerable pupils. One parent confirmed the view of many when she wrote, 'The staff have shown great patience in helping my son find ways to independently manage his behaviour.' There is well-targeted deployment of teaching assistants and mentors who support the pupils well. No stone is left unturned to ensure that pupils get to school and that parents and carers are involved in their children's education.

*These are the grades for the quality of provision*

<b>The quality of teaching</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
<b>The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of care, guidance and support</b>	<b>1</b>

## How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher's clear determination and drive to improve the school is successful because it is shared by everyone including the pupils. All are committed to sustaining the improvements already underway. Pupils' attainment is tracked accurately and the school meets its challenging targets. Relationships with homes and families are dealt with sensitively and staff feel valued and proud of their achievements. Safeguarding procedures, including risk assessments are outstanding. For example, staff are trained twice a term on how to provide medical aid and resuscitation for a small number of

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pupils with serious medical problems, should it be required. The school acts instantly on any safety concerns raised from parents.

Leadership and management of teaching is good with areas for improvement accurately identified. Senior leaders have recently started formal monitoring of teaching and learning in conjunction with the local authority adviser. Governors have continued to improve their effectiveness since the last inspection. They make a strong contribution to the school through an increasingly clear understanding of its performance and by taking a proactive role in the soft-federation arrangements. Improved school systems, such as tracking of pupils' achievement, help governors to hold the school to account.

Partnerships with organisations including local businesses and employers, medical, child and family centres are very well used to enrich pupils' experience. The school succeeds in its commitment to be an inclusive school, ensuring equality for all. Community cohesion is very well promoted locally and developing well at national and global levels. Pupils designed T-shirts to sell to support the Euroafrica bike ride in raising monies for African children's charities. Parents support their children by coming to assemblies and concerts; they are slowly joining their children in some homework and project work and the school has some well thought out plans to engage further with their parents, such as running ICT workshops.

*These are the grades for leadership and management*

<b>The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
<b>The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money</b>	<b>2</b>

**Views of parents and carers**

Parental comments were extremely positive, with almost all agreeing with the statements in the questionnaire that their children enjoy school, and that they are safe



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and very well cared for.

The majority of parents and carers, including those who met with inspectors, were very positive about the curriculum opportunities. For example, one parent wrote expressing the views of many, 'I particularly like the development of the outdoor classroom and a Forest School.' Another commented, 'It has welcoming, lively and interactive displays.' The inspectors agree.

## Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Black Combe Junior School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 46 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 116 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	25	54	20	43	0	0	1	2
The school keeps my child safe	28	61	17	37	1	2	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	21	46	24	52	0	0	1	2
My child is making enough progress at this school	24	52	18	39	0	0	1	2
The teaching is good at this school	27	59	17	37	1	2	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	20	43	22	48	3	7	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	18	39	27	59	0	0	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	20	43	25	54	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	23	50	22	48	0	0	1	2
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	21	46	21	46	3	7	1	2
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	15	33	28	61	2	4	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	21	46	23	50	2	4	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	26	57	15	33	2	4	0	0

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

# Glossary

## What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

## Overall effectiveness of schools inspected between September 2007 and July 2008

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	39	58	3	0
Primary schools	13	50	33	4
Secondary schools	17	40	34	9
Sixth forms	18	43	37	2
Special schools	26	54	18	2
Pupil referral units	7	55	30	7
All schools	15	49	32	5

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above were reported in The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills 2007/08.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

## Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.</li> <li>■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.</li> <li>■ The quality of teaching.</li> <li>■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships.</li> <li>■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.</li> </ul>
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

**This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.**



9 December 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Black Combe Junior School, Millom, LA18 5DT

Thank you for your very warm welcome when we came to inspect your school. It was a pleasure to visit your classes, to talk to some of you as a group and to more of you in lessons and at playtime. I am writing to tell you what we found out.

- Yours is a good school where you make good progress in your class work and in your personal development. You become thoughtful, considerate young people who are curious about learning and want to do well. Your parents agree.
- Adults in school take exceptionally good care of you and are keen to make sure you do well.
- Teachers plan interesting lessons, making sure you have a good variety of things to do. You progress well from the start of your schooldays at Black Combe Junior School.
- We also looked at whether boys' writing was improving, and found that this is the case, but it could be even better. We have asked teachers to carry on making sure all of you have lots of opportunities to write, such as the film reviews.
- We feel that those of you who are capable of reaching the higher levels could be given harder work to do.
- We think that the school provides you with exciting opportunities to learn, both in school and by going out in the minibuses with the bikes to explore the area around the school.
- We found that adults know what needs to be done and have good plans to make the school better.

All the very best for the future.

Yours sincerely,

Julie Ward

Lead inspector

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