

Houghton CofE School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	112250
Local Authority	Cumbria
Inspection number	337880
Inspection dates	28–29 September 2009
Reporting inspector	Alison Thomson

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	121
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Malcolm Scott
Headteacher	Mrs V Tyler
Date of previous school inspection	6 February 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. The inspectors visited nine lessons and held meetings with governors, staff and groups of pupils. They observed the school's work and analysed 60 questionnaire responses from parents and carers, 26 questionnaire responses from pupils and nine questionnaire responses from staff. The team also looked at the data the school had collected about pupils' progress, work in pupils' books and at the school's records of monitoring the quality of teaching.

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

- attainment and progress in 2009, with particular respect to writing and reading in Key Stage 1 and mathematics and science in Key Stage 2
- how the school uses assessment to help pupils improve their work, particularly to what extent pupils are involved in checking the effectiveness of their own learning
- the effectiveness of the school's monitoring and evaluation, particularly of areas it judges to be less strong, such as attainment in writing and reading in Key Stage 1 and the performance of the higher attaining pupils.

Information about the school

Houghton is a smaller than average primary school, situated in a small rural village on the outskirts of Carlisle. Pupils represent a range of economic and social backgrounds. The proportion of pupils eligible for school meals is well below the national average. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is below the national average, as is the proportion of those who have a statement of special educational needs. The majority of pupils are of White British backgrounds, with the percentage of pupils who speak English as an additional language very low. About 22% of pupils are of Traveller heritage, living on a site close to the school. There is Early Years Foundation Stage provision in a Reception class. There is private childcare in a Nursery nearby which is not part of this inspection. The school gained the Healthy Schools Award in 2008 and Activemark in 2009, for the promotion of a healthy lifestyle. The headteacher took up her post in September 2008 having been acting headteacher for the previous two terms. The deputy headteacher has been in post since September 2009.

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?**3****The school's capacity for sustained improvement****3**

Main findings

Houghton school provides a satisfactory and improving standard of education. All outcomes for its pupils are at least satisfactory, and their understanding of how to keep healthy is good. Pupils enjoy the school's very friendly atmosphere. There has been a considerable turnover of staff in recent years, which has interrupted the pace of improvement. Members of the new senior leadership team understand the strengths and areas for development well. They are making effective use of additional support from the local authority and a partner school. This is beginning to have the intended impact on pupils' progress. Parents and carers recognise the impact of the new senior leadership team. Typically, they comment, 'We believe that the headteacher and the deputy headteacher have formed an effective team and are making significant progress in moving the school forwards and recovering from a period of instability.'

Pupils are achieving satisfactorily. Attainment at the end of Year 6 has fluctuated over the last three years, but is broadly average. Relatively lower standards in areas such as mathematics and science have improved, but standards in writing throughout the school are not as high as those in other areas. This is because there are not enough opportunities for writing to be embedded in other topics or enough emphasis placed on matching writing tasks to pupils' interests. The quality of learning and progress is satisfactory and it is improving. This includes the progress of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, pupils from the Traveller community and the very few who speak English as an additional language. The satisfactory teaching is successful in helping pupils to move forward at the expected rate. In certain classes there is particularly effective teaching that results in learning which leads to pupils making good progress. However, in other lessons the work is not challenging enough, particularly for the most able pupils, and pupils are not given clear enough criteria by which they can assess their own learning. As a result, while the progress of the more able pupils is satisfactory, it is not as secure as that of other groups of pupils. Teaching is not yet good enough to accelerate progress fast enough.

The school has improved the learning environment with some bright displays that show pupils' work. Along with satisfactory care, guidance and support, this has helped to contribute to outcomes for pupils that are at least satisfactory. For example, pupils feel safe, behave sensibly and make a satisfactory contribution to the school and local communities. The headteacher and deputy headteacher have a clear insight and high expectations, which are resulting in the improvements in progress and in a rise in standards. This is confirmed by the increasingly detailed tracking of pupils' progress. Monitoring and evaluation is improving, but it is not as rigorous as it might be in some areas. For example, a close enough eye is not kept on the success of efforts to promote

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community cohesion and the impact of some strategies to address areas that are less strong. Thus, the school does not have a sharp analysis of all aspects of its performance at present. Although many of the new initiatives have yet to show evidence of impact, the improvements that have taken place in key areas indicate that the capacity to improve even further is satisfactory.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that all teaching is good or better to accelerate pupils' progress, especially that of the higher ability pupils by:
 - increasing the level of expectation and challenge in lessons
 - providing clear success criteria so that the learning of individual pupils can be checked easily
 - involving pupils more in assessing their own learning
- Raise attainment further, particularly in writing, by:
 - making writing tasks more relevant to pupils' interests
 - introducing writing into as many other curriculum areas as possible
- Monitor and evaluate the school's work more rigorously, especially:
 - relating to community cohesion at local, national and international levels, particularly the impact on pupils' understanding of different cultures
 - areas for development in teaching
 - the impact of strategies put in place to address areas that are less strong, such as the rate of progress of the higher ability pupils.
- About 40% of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**3**

The quality of learning and progress in lessons is satisfactory. Pupils behave well, contribute to discussions and often respond to the teacher's questions with enthusiasm. They concentrate well on the tasks teachers set them. As a result, current progress and learning are improving securely. Pupils learn and make the progress expected because most lessons are well organised. However, some lessons are not as sharply focused on learning as others. In a Year 3 English lesson pupils made good progress because there were clear steps to success which helped them structure their learning. However, in a Year 4/5 lesson in English and in a Year 6 lesson in information and communication technology pupils could not say if they were learning well as it was less clear what was expected of them. Scrutiny of pupils' work indicates that variation in progress is reducing, but that the most able pupils are not making progress fast enough.

Attainment at the end of Year 6 is average, with the previous decline in attainment in mathematics and science having been reversed. Attainment at the end of Year 2 is also

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average, with improved standards in reading and writing. However, leaders acknowledge that throughout the school attainment in writing is still not high enough and does not match attainment in other areas. Progress of all groups of pupils is satisfactory throughout the school. Progress in writing has improved, but pupils indicated that they sometimes find writing boring. There is no significant variation in the progress and learning of different groups of pupils in lessons, although the progress of the most able pupils is sometimes slower than that of their peers.

Pupils are clear about how to stay safe and they understand well the importance of a healthy diet and regular exercise. They appreciate the range of clubs and activities on offer and said how much they had enjoyed a recent visit to the theatre. They are considerate and look after each other around school, but say that they would like to be given more responsibility in roles such as play leaders. They believe that the school responds to their wishes and some of the older pupils remembered the school council being instrumental acquiring nets for the goal posts, 'so we don't lose the balls so often now'. They would like the school council to have a higher profile around the school. Pupils from the Travelling community have more absences than other pupils, but overall attendance is broadly average. Pupils have satisfactory spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. While the spiritual, moral and social aspects are strong, pupils' understanding of ethnic minority groups reflecting the mix in the United Kingdom is less secure.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	3
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	3
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	3
The extent to which pupils feel safe	3
Pupils' behaviour	3
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	3

¹ 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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The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	3
	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3

How effective is the provision?

Lessons are usually well planned and organised so that pupils make at least satisfactory progress. In most lessons the tasks teachers set are modified for the range of abilities within the class, but at times there is a lack of challenge. Teaching assistants often provide good support that enables pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities to have full access to lessons and activities. Occasionally, tasks are too prescriptive and restrict the opportunities that pupils have to work things out for themselves. This is particularly the case for the most able pupils. Teachers usually discuss with pupils what it is they should be learning, but sometimes this is not clear or detailed enough, meaning it is difficult to check how well individual learning has taken place. Pupils are not involved enough in assessing their own learning at present. The school has improved how teachers mark pupils' work. There are examples of good and effective marking where pupils' progress has benefited and their work improved. However, these improvements are not entirely consistent across the school; nevertheless, they are contributing strongly to the secure improvements in pupils' progress.

The curriculum is well organised and enriched by visits to places of interest, events at school and a wide range of clubs. Many of these opportunities add to the at least satisfactory progress that pupils make in their broader personal development. The many additional activities designed to increase the achievement of groups and individuals illustrate how well the curriculum is personalised for those who need it. The school is making increasing use of a range of strategies such as 'Big Writing' to tackle underachievement. This is having some success. The school is looking into ways of linking topics together and providing pupils with more creative tasks to capture their interests better.

Care, guidance and support are satisfactory. The school takes appropriate steps to tackle unnecessary absence. It has worked successfully with parents and carers, and the community, to reduce the number of persistent and holiday absences. The most vulnerable pupils are well supported through effective links with external agencies. Those who have special educational needs and/or difficulties receive carefully tailored support that allows them to benefit from lessons in mainstream classes and play a full part in all aspects of the life of the school. The school has individual educational plans for its most able pupils, but these do not focus clearly enough on providing opportunities for sufficient challenge at present. Behaviour is well managed and positive attitudes are strongly encouraged. The school is in the process of making play at lunchtimes more enjoyable, addressing pupils' concerns about the supervision arrangements.

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These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	3
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	3
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	3

How effective are leadership and management?

The drive to raise attainment is ensuring that learning and progress are improving. Although there have been many changes of staff in the recent past that have hindered progress, the determination to improve is apparent. There has been a clear ambition to raise the standard of teaching and learning to ensure that pupils make at least the expected progress. However, there has not been enough monitoring of lessons to check that weaker areas have been addressed. Many subject leaders are new in post, but already they are playing a part in monitoring the work in their areas. A new system for tracking pupils' progress is detailed and provides very useful information, but there are inconsistencies in the way the information is generated and displayed, hindering the way the information is interpreted. Nevertheless, the resulting analysis shows clearly those pupils who are making good progress and those who are not making as much as expected. This leads to better use of target setting, which is being used effectively to improve the progress made by all groups of pupils and raise standards. Currently, all groups of pupils, including those from the Traveller community and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, make satisfactory progress, reflecting satisfactory equality of opportunity for all pupils. Governors know the school well and what it needs to do to improve. They are visible and active around the school. They challenge the school effectively, but they are not sufficiently involved in evaluating its performance. The procedures for ensuring the safety of pupils are satisfactory. The school has acknowledged that it is yet to complete its evaluation of how well it promotes community cohesion. While the promotion of community cohesion locally is satisfactory, opportunities for pupils to gain a broader national and international dimension have not yet been planned.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	3
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	3
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	3

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The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	3
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	3
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	3
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	3
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	4
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children get off to a sound start in the Reception class. They settle in quickly and are keen to learn. Children play together well and are well behaved. They enjoy their learning. Most children join with the expected skills for their age, but a significant minority have less well-developed language and literary skills. Overall, they make satisfactory progress and at the end of Reception reach the levels

expected for their age in most areas of learning. Although their levels of attainment remain below what is expected in communication, language and literacy, a good focus on writing enables them to make satisfactory progress.

Adults provide well for children's welfare. There are well-established routines to promote their personal development, such as tidying up and hand washing. There is a good balance between activities chosen by children and those led by adults. Adults generally support children well and their explanations are clear. Adults have been successful in developing children's early skills by picking up on their interests and extending them. Girls and boys were seen enthusiastically engaged in activities to celebrate 'Freddy the frog's' birthday. Making cards stimulated both their creative development and writing, and wrapping gifts with the safe use of scissors aided their fine motor skills. There is a pleasant, safe outdoor area, but activities there are not always imaginative enough to promote good quality learning.

Leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage are satisfactory. Adults regularly assess what the children know, understand and can do. Help from the local authority has ensured that these assessments are now more accurate than previously. In addition, the progress of different groups of children is beginning to be tracked and analysed.

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These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	3

Views of parents and carers

The large majority of parents and carers are positive about all aspects of the school. A small minority felt that their children were not making enough progress and that the school did not help them support their children's learning. Inspectors found that all groups of pupils make satisfactory progress. The school recognises the need to provide parents and carers with more guidance about how they can help their children learn. A few parents and carers expressed concern about the school's arrangements for midday supervision. The school is aware of this issue and is already taking steps to address it.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Houghton CoFE 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 inspector received 60 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 121 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	70	63	37	33	3	3	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	65	58	41	37	4	4	2	2
The school informs me about my child's progress	26	23	69	62	15	14	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	36	33	49	45	19	18	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	40	36	61	55	7	6	2	2
The school helps me to support my child's learning	31	28	58	53	18	16	2	2
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	41	37	56	50	3	3	9	8
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)	28	27	61	59	7	7	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	41	38	50	47	11	10	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	26	25	54	51	8	8	12	11
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	34	31	58	54	12	11	2	2
The school is led and managed effectively	51	47	42	39	8	7	4	4
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	47	44	50	46	7	6	2	2

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

	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
Type of school	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"> ■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement. ■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils. ■ The quality of teaching. ■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships. ■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
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.



Inspection of Houghton C of E School, Carlisle, CA3 0PA

This letter is to tell you about the findings of the recent inspection and to thank you for taking the time to talk to us. We enjoyed visiting your lessons and seeing the work you do.

Yours is a satisfactory school. You are able to learn in a very friendly atmosphere. You have a very clear understanding of what it means to be healthy. You behave, work and play together sensibly. Your questionnaires told us that you enjoy all the things that you do at school very much and that you feel safe there. They also told us that you know who to talk to if anyone causes you to be unhappy. Many of you also commented that you would like the lunchtime arrangements to improve and the school is taking steps to make this happen.

The teachers make lessons interesting. They mark your work and often make comments to help you to improve. You are making the progress expected of you, and some of you are doing well. You concentrate on your work and the progress you make is speeding up. We would like to see you all making good progress. This is also the aim of the headteacher and teachers. So we have asked them to continue to raise the standard of work you reach, especially in writing. We have also asked them to make it clear what you have to do to be successful in your lessons and to involve you more in checking how well you are doing.

There have been a number of changes to help you do better. We have asked the headteacher and governors to become more involved in checking how well the changes help you, so that they can make more precise plans to improve further. We have also asked the headteacher to find ways of helping you learn about people of different backgrounds and cultures, both in the United Kingdom and abroad.

We enjoyed being in your school, and hope that in the future it is even more successful in helping you to do as well as you possibly can.

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