

Rockcliffe CofE School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	112258
Local Authority	Cumbria
Inspection number	337884
Inspection dates	17–18 September 2009
Reporting inspector	John Heap

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	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	98
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Ian Park
Headteacher	Mr David Hodgkiss
Date of previous school inspection	2 December 2006
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. The inspectors visited eight lessons, and held meetings with governors, staff and groups of pupils. They observed the school's work, and looked at pupils' books, the school's tracking of pupils' achievements, minutes of recent governing body meetings and individual education plans. Sixty-one parental questionnaires were returned. The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following:

- the achievement, provision and leadership and management in the Early Years Foundation Stage
- the achievement of pupils in Key Stage 1 to determine whether teaching and provision is sufficiently challenging and supportive
- the achievement of pupils in minority groups and the way that the school is lowering barriers to their learning
- how well assessment information is used to challenge pupils, including the use of marking
- whether improvement planning is rigorous enough to ensure ambitious development in the school.

Information about the school

This is a below average sized primary school that serves a rural area on the outskirts of Carlisle. The proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals is below average. Most pupils are White British and a very small number of pupils come from Traveller family backgrounds. None are learning English as an additional language. An above average proportion of pupils are identified as having special educational needs and/or disabilities. The school provides for children's learning in the Early Years Foundation Stage in the Nursery and Reception class. The school has gained several awards, including: European Award for Languages; Sportsmark and Healthy School Status.

The school has experienced a lengthy period of turbulence caused by long-established staff leaving, resulting in temporary replacements. The current headteacher has been in post since September 2008.

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

After a prolonged period of change and disruption, the school is accurate in its evaluation that it is a satisfactory school and provides sound value for money.

Pupils are happy, collaborate well with each other and adults and mostly enjoy their lessons. Leaders and managers are rightly keen to improve the outcomes and provision for pupils and their sound efforts mean that the school has a satisfactory capacity for sustained improvement.

Overall, pupils make satisfactory progress in their learning and personal development because the quality of teaching, curriculum and care, guidance and support is adequate. As a result, pupils are adequately prepared for their future. Caution is necessary when analysing, judging and commenting on attainment data because the number of pupils in each year group is small. Nevertheless, attainment is average at the ages of 7 and 11 and there are signs of an upward trend in national test results. However, pupils' writing is not as good as it could be because the teachers' expectations of what pupils can do are not high enough.

The quality of teaching is variable. The best teaching is in upper Key Stage 2, where pupils make the quickest progress and achieve more. This is because class management, lesson planning and the challenge for pupils are all good. The school has an appropriate and increasing range of procedures for checking and tracking pupils' achievements, but only in Years 5 and 6 are they used well enough to set consistently challenging targets. Consequently, in the other parts of the school, the quality of lessons is satisfactory, with a small number that are inadequate. Marking is equally inconsistent, with some pupils unsure of what they have achieved and what they need to do to improve further.

Parents are satisfied with the quality of education and care their children receive. Behaviour is satisfactory, overall. Pupils contribute well to the school and local community because there are lots of opportunities for them to participate. This is a strength of the curriculum. Where the curriculum is less strong is in providing enough scope for pupils to use and develop their writing skills in other subjects.

Leadership and management are satisfactory. In general terms, the school is aware of its strengths and weaknesses and there have been satisfactory improvements recently. However, insufficient emphasis has been placed on developing robust monitoring and evaluation procedures, particularly in checks made on teaching quality. There is too great an emphasis on the teachers' performance, rather than the quality of learning going on. Consequently, attainment and progress, teaching and the use of assessment are inconsistent across the school. Moreover, the school improvement planning lacks

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sharp and precise criteria for measuring the success of its work on priorities. Governance is satisfactory. Governors are highly supportive, but they are over-reliant on the information provided by the leadership rather than their own gathering of facts. Consequently, they have an over-generous appreciation of the school's current standing. Financial management is prudent, the small deficit has been eliminated and funds have been made available for important projects.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise attainment in writing by:
 - ensuring that pupils have many more opportunities to use and develop their skills in a much wider range of subjects
 - improving the quality of marking, so that it makes clear how well pupils are working towards their individual targets and what they need to do to improve further.
- Improve teaching and achievement in Years 1 to 4 by:
 - eliminating any inadequate teaching and learning
 - ensuring that the quality of teaching and learning is, at least, good.
- Make leadership and management more rigorous by:
 - sharpening the success criteria in the school improvement plan, so that they are clearly measurable and challenging
 - improving the checks made on teaching and learning. In particular, focussing more on what pupils learn rather than the teacher's performance
 - developing governors' skills, knowledge and understanding of how to evaluate the school's performance.
- 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**

In Years 1 and 2, pupils make satisfactory progress in lessons and attainment is broadly average. This is confirmed in recent national assessments where standards have been rising in recent years. Attainment is also rising at the end of Year 6, particularly in mathematics. Equally, in a science lesson, Year 6 pupils made good progress in their learning and books show that this is consistent across other subjects. Nevertheless, as recognised in the school's improvement planning, writing remains the weakest area and attainment could be higher. Generally, boys and girls make similar progress in lessons from their starting points. The school is responding appropriately to any perceived shortcomings by providing extra challenge through 'booster groups' and acquiring more resources that will interest pupils. The more able pupils reach the higher levels of attainment expected of them. Those pupils with special educational needs and/or

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disabilities are supported effectively in lessons and are making satisfactory progress towards their individual targets. Pupils from Traveller families make steady progress. Pupils are polite and helpful. Around the school and in most lessons they are well behaved, but in some less demanding lessons the behaviour can be poor and pupils easily distracted. Of course, this slows the progress they make in these lessons. Pupils have good social skills and work and play well together. They enjoy school, as reflected in the above average levels of attendance. A range of school activities helps pupils learn successfully how to lead healthy lifestyles and keep safe. Older pupils talk readily about the benefits of healthy eating, regular exercise and cleanliness. Pupils know how to avoid unnecessary risks, for example, the potential dangers of very hot water when studying condensation in a Year 5/6 science lesson. They contribute willingly and successfully take on responsibilities, such as helping the Early Years Foundation Stage children and in the work of the school council. Moreover, pupils take part in a range of events in the wider community, often linked to the work of the church. Pupils have developed a particularly strong knowledge and understanding of the cultural aspects of art and music. They also have a satisfactory appreciation of religions and cultures different to their own. Achievement in the basic skills of English and mathematics is satisfactory and pupils are adequately prepared for their future learning.

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	2
Pupils' behaviour	3
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	2

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 of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

3

How effective is the provision?

Pupils are making good progress in Years 5 and 6 because staff are challenging them to think independently, take part in investigative and problem-solving work and improve their basic skills. This is successful because it is supported by effective assessment and marking, and independent target-setting. Pupils respond well to this and recognise that the challenge has to be met. Into this group, there has also been added a small number of the more able Year 4 pupils who are making good gains in their learning.

Nevertheless, on too many occasions, teaching in other year groups is insufficiently challenging and some pupils do not make consistent progress. This is because the effective use of assessment information to match work to pupils' needs and the quality of marking are patchy. Where marking is effective, it is obvious to the pupil what they have done well and what they need to do to progress further. Too often, clarity in this guidance is lacking. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities receive appropriate support and they make satisfactory progress as a result.

The curriculum has plenty of activities that enable pupils to be emotionally and physically healthy, resilient and aware of how to stay safe. Independence is forged by a good range of enjoyable, enriching and relevant activities. These include visits to places of educational interest, including residential stays, and visitors into school, such as musicians, artists and people from a variety of minority ethnic backgrounds. Academic development is fostered adequately. Provision for art and music, including enrichment activities, is good. The art on display in the school is precise, colourful and attractive. Throughout the school pupils are taught German and there are numerous examples in upper Key Stage 2 of pupils being challenged by experiments and investigations in science and mathematics. However, pupils do not have enough opportunities to practise and reinforce writing and numeracy skills in other subjects. Too often, prepared worksheets restrict the quality of writing.

This is a caring school where staff know the pupils well. This is due to good monitoring of aspects such as pupils' attendance. There are successful induction and transition arrangements for pupils entering and leaving the school. Outside agencies play an important role in supporting pupils from potentially vulnerable groups.

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

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How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher and senior colleagues actively seek the views of partners, including parents and carers, and appropriately promote a supportive and inclusive vision for the school. All minority groups in the school have their needs adequately identified and support programmes implemented where appropriate, ensuring that all pupils have equal access to all the school offers. The school council reported that everyone is treated fairly and that they knew of no examples of discrimination or bias. However, there is a growing realisation that the tracking of pupils' academic achievements to raise attainment is not sufficiently rigorous. Work has started on much needed improvements in the use and development of academic assessment. As a result, the school has a better view of any inconsistencies in pupils' progress. Initiatives have been introduced to overcome these, for instance, in science and mathematics and there is an upward trend in results. Nevertheless, there is room for improvement such as the introduction of more rigorous and accurate monitoring of teaching. Although priorities in the school improvement plan are accurately identified, there is not enough focus on measurable and challenging targets for all year groups, in order to raise attainment further. Consequently, it is more difficult for leaders and managers to embed a more ambitious pursuit of better progress for pupils.

The governing body ensures that legal requirements are met. Systems to protect and safeguard children adequately meet national guidelines. However, the governing body does not have sufficiently rigorous procedures to review policies and evaluate the work of the school. Financial management is sound and has led, for example, to the school successfully providing better outdoor facilities for play and the community. This is just one of the initiatives that are increasingly and effectively promoting community cohesion. Clearly, the school understands the nature of the area, such as the lack of community amenities and it is playing its part in addressing them. Moreover, various activities promote knowledge and understanding of national and global perspectives, such as visits to places like Newcastle and active links with a school in Africa.

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
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

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The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	3
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children start in both the Nursery and the Reception groups with average skills and abilities. Lessons and activities are effectively organised and children make satisfactory progress in each area of learning. Children enter Year 1 with skills and abilities that are average for their age. The enthusiastic staff ensure that the curriculum and lesson plans are adequately based on current national guidelines. The development of basic skills is given a great deal of importance, particularly later in the year. As a result, the balance of teacher-led and child initiated activities is weighted too heavily towards formal teaching. The satisfactory curriculum is enriched by a range of enjoyable activities, including using technology and learning music from a specialist teacher. There are good links with a local arts college to develop their pottery and tile-making skills. A good development since the last inspection is the improved outdoor area which has 'something for everybody' according to one child. Staff closely monitor children's achievements and assemble these judgements into an adequate overview of the performance of both groups and individuals. Induction procedures and the care provided to children are satisfactory, as are leadership and management. The coordinator is aware of the strengths, such as the pastoral care, and weaknesses that include cramped premises and weaker early writing skills, particularly among the boys. To overcome the latter, early writing resources are placed in the areas for learning most frequented by the boys and this strategy is beginning to have some impact on their attainment.

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

Most parents are satisfied with the outcomes for their child and what the school provides. Particular views expressed, which agreed with inspectors' judgements, related to how well the school keeps their children safe and how it helps them maintain a healthy lifestyle. Comments included on the questionnaires were largely positive and

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supportive about staff, management and what the school achieves. Some were also understanding about the disrupted nature of the last few years. There were a very small number of negative comments. Inspectors investigated these comments and, as appropriate, these informed the judgements made.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Rockcliffe CoE Primary 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 61 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 98 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	84	71	32	27	1	1	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	90	73	31	25	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	84	69	37	31	0	0	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	84	69	34	28	3	2	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	87	76	26	23	1	1	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	86	74	28	24	2	2	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	63	66	30	32	2	2	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)	75	68	32	29	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	78	66	38	32	1	1	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	71	61	43	37	0	0	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	82	68	38	31	0	0	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	93	76	27	22	1	1	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	110	87	16	13	0	0	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"> ■ 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 Rockcliffe CE School, Cumbria, CA6 4AA

On behalf of the inspection team, may I thank you all for your warm welcome, happy smiles, courtesy and the help you gave us. Rockcliffe CE is a satisfactory school and I would like to tell you what we think about it.

Here are some of the best things we found:

- the way that Year 2 and Year 6 results in national tests are steadily improving
- the good knowledge you have of leading healthy and safe lifestyles
- your good attitudes to school and work and the strong support you give to each other
- the way that you and your parents appreciate the work the school does
- the enjoyment you get from your time in school and the above average attendance
- the good contribution made by pupils to the day-to-day running of the school and out in the community, particularly through the links with the church
- the good range of activities that make learning more exciting for you, such as the visits you undertake and the visitors who come into school
- the way that staff are trying hard to improve the school, particularly the checking of the progress you make.

To improve the school further we have asked your teachers:

- to work with you to improve learning in writing. Part of this will be the better way that staff use marking and the results of your work to give you good guidance on how well you are doing and what you need to do next. Also, we have asked that you have more opportunities to write in other subjects such as history and religious education
- to make sure that the quality of teaching in Years 1 to 4 is, at least, good
- to improve the way they plan for developments; check on how well the school is doing, particularly the quality of teaching and learning; and how governors judge the school. The school council may be able to play a part in this work.

You can be a great help by always doing your best work.

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