

Low Furness CofE Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	112299
Local Authority	Cumbria
Inspection number	337897
Inspection dates	19–20 January 2010
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	111
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Ray Browne
Headteacher	Mrs Margaret Longstaffe
Date of previous school inspection	7 November 2006
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. Approximately 50% of the time was spent looking at learning. The inspectors visited eight lessons and observed four teachers. The inspectors held meetings with governors, staff and groups of pupils. They observed the school's work; and looked at the school's self-evaluation document, the school improvement plan, papers that track pupils' achievements, important documentation about safeguarding, minutes of governors' meetings and reports from the local authority. The number of questionnaires that were received from parents and carers totalled 45.

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

- whether pupils' achievement in writing and mathematics was good enough and the quality of the teaching in both subjects
- the main features of pupils' learning and how teachers were promoting this in lessons
- the robustness of the assessment and tracking systems
- the quality of leadership and management, most particularly in raising pupils' achievement, improving governance and reducing the budget deficit.

Information about the school

This small school serves a rural area. The proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals is below average. Pupils are mainly from White British backgrounds with a very small number from other minority ethnic backgrounds. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is below average. The school has been awarded Healthy Schools status and Artsmark Gold. Extended services include community access and the use of the school as a venue for a local charity.

The school is going through an extended period of disruption caused by major changes in governance and staffing. The headteacher is leaving the school at the end of the spring term.

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

This is a satisfactory school. Pupils enjoy their education and speak warmly of the many and varied activities that form a strong part of the satisfactory curriculum. A real strength is the way pupils develop a detailed understanding of diverse societies through the school's good promotion of community cohesion. All of this also plays a part in the satisfactory promotion of equal opportunities and tackling discrimination. The vast majority of parents and carers who returned questionnaires believe their children enjoy school and one wrote, 'Overall very happy with the school'.

The Early Years Foundation Stage is an improved and successful part of the school. Children make good progress because resources are better and staff check on children's attainment in a much more rigorous way than previously. By the end of Year 6 attainment is broadly average in English, mathematics and science. This is satisfactory achievement as these pupils entered Year 1 at broadly average levels. However, attainment in writing is not high enough, either at the end of Year 2 or Year 6. This is mainly owing to too little writing being done, particularly in subjects other than English. Moreover, the use of assessment to challenge pupils is not rigorous enough, particularly the use of marking.

Teaching is inconsistent and, as a consequence, is satisfactory overall. Assessment information is not used well enough to provide suitably challenging work. As a result, there are differences in teachers' expectations and, occasionally, a small minority of pupils are not fully interested in the work they are doing. This is particularly true of the more able pupils. Nevertheless, classrooms are happy and generally industrious. Pupils say they particularly enjoy practical and research activities. Older pupils look forward to using their good information and communication technology (ICT) skills.

Staff and governors are rightly focused on improving important areas of school business, such as attainment and progress in writing, and the quality and use of assessment and financial management. Initiatives have been introduced, but the impact has been restricted by the changes to staffing and governance. Self-evaluation is over-generous in several areas, such as judging care, guidance and support as good rather than satisfactory. The procedures and practices for safeguarding are satisfactory. The current priorities are accurate and provide a sensible prospectus for moving the school forward. Nevertheless, the school improvement plan lacks clear criteria for measuring impact and, as a result, is only adequately rigorous. Equally, governors are only recently coming to terms with the development of a more robust way of working. They fully recognise the need for a more evaluative approach. Systems for monitoring and evaluation are improving and this means that the school's capacity to improve is satisfactory.

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What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise attainment and improve progress in writing by:
 - providing pupils with many more opportunities to write, including in their work in subjects other than English
 - improving basic skills, such as spelling
 - ensuring that pupils have a much clearer view of what is expected of them.
- Improve the quality of teaching by:
 - using assessment information more rigorously to match accurately the work to pupils' needs
 - ensuring that marking tells pupils what they have achieved and what they need to do to improve further
 - rigorously monitoring and evaluating lessons to ensure that the expectations on pupils are high enough.
- Make leadership and management more rigorous by:
 - strengthening leaders' skills in monitoring and evaluating the work in their subjects
 - strengthening governors' abilities to check independently on the school's work, achievements and shortcomings
 - ensuring that the school improvement plan has robust criteria for measuring success.
- 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

Pupils are generally interested in their work and most show enthusiasm. This was evident in a good Year 1/2 writing lesson where the teacher exploited the recent harsh weather conditions to inspire pupils to write an information sheet about winter. Pupils collaborate well in the 'talking partner' parts of lessons, but sometimes lose concentration when they are asked to sit and think. They prefer being active and this was clearly so in the good science lesson in the Year 5/6 class. From starting in Year 1 at average levels most make satisfactory progress to reach expected levels in Year 6. Most pupils have good speaking, listening and reading skills. However, the knowledge, understanding and ideas they acquire do not fully inform their writing. Most pupils have strong number skills, but there are too few opportunities to use these in problem-solving and investigation activities. Most pupils have good ICT skills and they enjoy the opportunities to word process and research topics. They work at a good pace on the computers. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those from minority ethnic backgrounds receive sound support and make satisfactory progress.

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Pupils clearly enjoy school and this is reflected in the views of parents and carers, and in good attendance and punctuality. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. As a result, good attitudes to learning and behaviour are the norm. Pupils say that any inappropriate behaviour is dealt with quickly and fairly. Pupils contribute well to the school and local community. Good examples are the ways the school council leads efforts to raise funds for charities and takes part in activities that develop skills in negotiating and decision making. Such activities help pupils develop adequate skills for their future schooling and economic well-being. Pupils have a good understanding of the need for safety, regular exercise and healthy eating.

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	2
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
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

Satisfactory teaching includes several strengths, including warm and respectful relationships between staff and pupils. Pupils live up to high expectations of behaviour and a conducive atmosphere for learning is evident in all classes. Pupils work with a sense of purpose as the aims of their lessons are clearly explained. Lessons are usually planned well, with proper consideration being given to the different needs of pupils

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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across the range of ability and attainment. Teaching assistants give sound support to pupils, sometimes clarifying points in whole-class introductions. Pupils' work is marked regularly and positively. However, it does not point out frequently, or well enough, what the pupil has achieved and what could be improved.

The school's satisfactory curriculum provides pupils with interesting lessons and experiences enriched by a good range of out-of-class activities, visits and visitors. The outdoor provision is excellent with many challenging activities, both intellectually and physically. Satisfactory provision is made for the development of literacy and numeracy, and the school is aware that writing does not have enough prominence, both in English lessons and in other subjects. Provision for ICT is good and, as a result, pupils are confident in its use. The great enthusiasm with which pupils speak about creative elements of the curriculum, such as art and music, reflects the school's success in gaining the Artsmark Gold award. Provision for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is satisfactory, as is that for those identified as gifted and talented.

The governing body takes adequate steps to ensure that the environment is safe, appropriate adults are employed and potential dangers are avoided through appropriate risk assessments. Most parents and carers are assured that the school keeps their children safe and cared for. Pupils also say they feel happy and safe. The effective monitoring of attendance and behaviour means that these areas are strengths of the school. On the very few occasions when a pupil has difficulties attending, the school works well with support services to bring about an improvement. Academic guidance is satisfactory.

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?

Strengths include the good promotion of community cohesion and effective links with partners. Local culture is effectively promoted through very strong links with the church. Equally, leaders and managers recognise the need to provide pupils with a broad spectrum of learning opportunities, particularly in relation to the variety of national and global cultures, such as the strong links with two schools in Ghana. This has resulted in pupils speaking with clarity about the concerns and empathy for people 'who are not as lucky as [they] are'.

Senior leaders identify the correct priorities for the school. Plans for development are adequate but not fully driving improvement because they lack rigour, particularly in

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relation to identifying challenging success criteria. Subject coordinators have increasing responsibility for provision and standards achieved. However, developments have been slowed by staffing changes and the full range of improvements is still in the process of being implemented; for example, improvements in writing are still being implemented. The headteacher provides sound leadership by involving partners in decision making and evaluation by explaining, discussing and developing ideas with them. The satisfactory governing body is keen to be involved and governors have improved their role in monitoring and evaluation by linking a governor with a subject leader. Consequently, they are better informed than previously and more able to evaluate the school and its activities. Equality of opportunity is soundly promoted. A financial deficit has developed over several years and the school is successfully working in concert with the local authority to reduce this. The year-on-year budget is currently in surplus and so the deficit is being reduced.

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	2
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	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children's skills and abilities on entry to the Early Years Foundation Stage vary and, overall, they are typical for this age. Increasingly, attainment in communication, language and literacy, and personal, social and emotional development is lower than expected. Children settle quickly and make good progress. Improvements in resources and assessment mean children make good progress. By the time they start Year 1 attainment is now above average and achievement is good. The more able children also make good progress and are comfortably ready for the challenges of the National Curriculum. The quality of the provision is good. Practitioners show enthusiasm and

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energy. They provide an appropriately balanced approach which allows children to learn through their play and receive direct teaching in important areas, such as the sounds of letters and counting.

Induction arrangements are good and include home visits. Behaviour is very good. Children with special educational needs and/or disabilities are quickly identified and given appropriate additional support. The school has invested a great deal of money in improving the external learning areas and this is paying dividends because the rate of progress has improved since the last inspection. Staff diligently maintain a safe learning environment. Children are assessed carefully and planning is adapted to ensure that they enjoy stimulating activities that improve their skills. For example, writing resources are included in the areas of learning that children often make their way to. The staff team is increasingly skilled in maintaining and evaluating provision; consequently, the Early Years Foundation Stage is well led and managed.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2

Views of parents and carers

Overall, the large majority of parents and carers who returned questionnaires are satisfied with the school's work and what it has to offer. However, in several areas a small minority of their responses raise concerns, such as:

- the progress their children are making – inspection evidence shows that progress is satisfactory
- the help parents and carers get to support their children's learning – inspection evidence shows this to be satisfactory
- how well the school deals with unacceptable behaviour – none was seen during the inspection and pupils say that any incidents are dealt with promptly and well
- the way the school acts on parents' and carers' suggestions and concerns – overall, the evidence shows the school does act on their views
- the effectiveness of leadership and management – despite the generally satisfactory picture there are issues that need to be addressed. In the main, these have been identified by the school.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Low Furness C of E 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 inspector received 45 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 111 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	27	60	16	36	2	4	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	30	67	15	33	1	2	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	17	38	19	42	8	18	2	4
My child is making enough progress at this school	19	42	12	27	12	27	2	4
The teaching is good at this school	22	49	15	33	8	18	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	12	27	22	49	10	22	2	4
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	24	53	21	47	0	0	1	2
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)	13	29	25	56	7	16	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	17	38	17	38	5	11	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	14	31	17	38	12	27	2	4
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	7	16	25	56	5	11	3	7
The school is led and managed effectively	12	27	18	40	9	20	6	13
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	23	51	16	36	6	13	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.



21 January 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Low Furness C of E Primary School, Ulverston, LA12 0TA

On behalf of the team, I would like to thank you for the enjoyable time the inspectors spent in your school recently. Your warm welcome, courtesy and help are much appreciated.

It is not easy to cover all the points in a short letter, but here are some of the main findings we found about your satisfactory school.

We really liked:

- the improvements in the good Nursery and Reception groups
- your good attitudes, behaviour and the strong relationships you develop with each other and the adults
- the contribution made by pupils to the day-to-day running of the school and to special projects, such as fundraising for the schools in Ghana
- the good attendance that shows your enjoyment of school
- your good knowledge and understanding of healthy and safe lifestyles
- the school's strong approach to helping you understand how communities live in very different areas, including your own
- the effective links set up with partners, such as those with the secondary school to support your learning in French.

In order for the school to improve further, your teachers will help you to improve your writing. I know that you will want to assist in this by always doing your best work, acting on the advice given and reaching the challenging targets set for you. I have also asked that all teaching and assessment of your work is raised to a good standard. Finally, the staff and governors will work even harder to check on how things are developing in the school.

The inspection team wishes you well and good luck for the future.

Yours faithfully

John Heap

Lead inspector

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