

Hallbankgate Village School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	112417
Local Authority	Cumbria
Inspection number	337929
Inspection dates	26–27 May 2010
Reporting inspector	Sheila Mawer

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Foundation
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	46
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Ms Ann Creed
Headteacher	Mrs Edith Graham
Date of previous school inspection	12 September 2006
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one additional inspector. The inspector observed eight lessons and looked at pupils' work. The three teachers and two other practitioners in the school were all observed. Meetings were also held with staff, pupils and representatives of the governing body. In observing the school's work a range of documents were examined including the school improvement plan, assessment information, safeguarding procedures, minutes of meetings of the governing body and records of monitoring and evaluation. Telephone discussions took place with the Chair of Governors and the School Improvement Partner. The inspector also analysed 15 questionnaires returned by parents and carers. In addition, the questionnaires received from pupils and staff were scrutinised.

The inspector reviewed many aspects of the school's work and looked in detail at the following:

- whether teaching and learning are sufficiently challenging to enable all pupils and particularly the more able to achieve as well as they can
- how well assessment is used to meet the needs of all learners and help them to improve
- how far the 'enquiry and creative' curriculum is meeting pupils' needs academically and personally in the mixed-age classes and impacting on progress
- how well the leadership team is driving forward improvements
- whether the children's needs in Nursery and Reception are being met in the mixed-age class.

Information about the school

This very small rural school serves the local village and neighbouring communities. Pupils are taught in two classes. Nursery provision was completed in September 2009. Most pupils are White British. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is below average. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs is well above average. The school has received several awards reflecting its commitment to healthy lifestyles. It has also been successful in becoming an Enquiry and Creative School. The school has recently experienced significant staff changes, absence and reduction in staffing due to falling rolls. Three acting headteachers have led the school since September 2009. With the help of the local authority the governors have appointed an experienced acting headteacher for three days a week. The Chair of the Governing Body has changed several times over the past three years. The current acting headteacher was appointed in January 2010.

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 caring and supportive school provides a satisfactory education for its pupils. During the last 12 months, significant disruption to staffing including leadership and management has slowed down the drive for sustained improvement, particularly in teaching and learning and has impacted adversely on pupils' achievement. Stability has been brought by the acting headteacher working purposefully with the new Chair of the Governing Body, a permanent teaching force and the local authority. Together, they are bringing a sharper focus to monitoring and self-evaluation. The drive towards improvements and raising standards and achievement has resumed. Many good features from the last inspection have been maintained and other improvements have been made. Collectively, leaders and staff are providing the school with a secure capacity to sustain improvement.

Successful pastoral care, very positive relationships and good links with other providers are enabling pupils to feel happy, safe and healthy. Pupils behave thoughtfully towards each other and attend school exceptionally well. They endorse their enjoyment of school when they say, 'The staff really care for us and make the learning fun'. The curriculum is becoming more innovative and adding considerably to pupils' enjoyment, although literacy and numeracy are not used sufficiently in other subjects to help raise standards further.

Achievement and standards have dipped between inspections because of numerous staff changes. Most pupils are now making up lost ground through stable and stronger teaching. Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage make satisfactory progress in the mixed-age class. The opportunities for them to take a more dynamic part in their own learning are limited at times, in particular, in physical activities. Pupils' achievement and progress across the rest of the school are satisfactory and attainment is broadly average by the end of Year 6. Groups of more able pupils do not always attain their potential. This is because tasks do not challenge them enough to think hard and learn well. Even so, the use of assessment in the teaching and learning has improved since the last inspection. Target-setting and marking are used well in Key Stage 2 to help pupils to improve their learning, but this is less so in Key Stage 1.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Accelerate pupils' progress by:
- – ensuring that teachers consistently provide meaningful tasks that match pupils' different abilities and, in particular, the needs of the more able pupils
- – improving marking and target-setting in Key Stage 1, to help pupils to understand

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how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve and attain their targets

- – providing more opportunities for pupils to practice their literacy and numeracy skills across the curriculum.
- Improve provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage by:
 - – extending opportunities for physical development outdoors
 - – ensuring that activities are stimulating and lead to good progress
 - – making sure that key workers ask questions that are sufficiently challenging to keep children strongly engaged in initiating their own learning.
- Strengthen leadership and management to drive forward improvements by:
 - – maintaining stability in the school
 - – resuming the monitoring and evaluation of the teaching and learning and taking effective action to further improve teaching
 - – ensuring that governors continue to strengthen their effectiveness in holding the school to account.
- About 40% of schools whose 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**

Many pupils say how much they enjoy exploring their own ideas in lessons. They generally show good levels of interest in their learning and are extremely keen to attend school regularly and punctually. In most lessons pupils persist with their tasks enthusiastically, particularly when they are sufficiently challenged. For example, in one lesson in Key Stage 2, pupils showed good levels of confidence and concentration when they tried different ways to work out long division. They also worked responsibly with a partner and without direct supervision from an adult. More able pupils are less inclined to work really hard in lessons if the pace slows or tasks are too easy. Pupils attain broadly average standards in English, mathematics and science and this represents satisfactory progress and achievement from their starting points. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make the same progress as most other pupils because work is usually well matched to their needs and they receive extra support. Pupils play happily together, behave well and take on responsibilities such as play leaders. They are clear that they feel safe in school and say that bullying is rare. They remember the recent 'Kid Safe' visit, quoting, 'Never put your personal details on the web site, unless you've got a privacy setting'. Pupils regularly help others less fortunate than themselves. The school council plan fund-raising events, but are less involved in improving the school. Pupils' good understanding of healthy lifestyles is reflected in their eagerness to walk or cycle to school and to participate in sporting activities. Pupils are currently working on menus for healthier school meals. Opportunities for pupils to contribute to the local community faltered during the school's period of instability, but are developing again. Pupils are soundly prepared for the next stage of education and their future lives.

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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	3
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	1
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3

How effective is the provision?

Teaching is never less than satisfactory, with examples of good teaching in Key Stage 2. Good relationships ensure that pupils are usually engaged in their learning and there is a calm and friendly atmosphere. Teachers generally present work in an interesting way and use a good range of resources. Their subject knowledge is secure and they explain ideas confidently. In the best lessons, challenging work is set for different groups, pupils are given responsibility for their own learning and a rigorous pace is maintained.

Teaching is less effective when in some lessons these elements are missing. The use of assessment to support teaching and learning is satisfactory and improving. Marking and target-setting are generally working well in Key Stage 2 and helping pupils to improve. In Key Stage 1 the wording of the targets is often too difficult for pupils to understand and marking, although positive, does not provide pupils with clear pointers for improvement.

The school's progress is satisfactory in developing a more creative and enjoyable curriculum. It includes tasks such as working in close partnership with a national society, to produce a documentary film on 'Saving our Squirrels'. Activities such as this are

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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greatly enhancing pupils' enjoyment and their experiences of life. Frequent staff changes have slowed some developments within the curriculum. In particular, there are too few opportunities for pupils to practise their literacy and numeracy skills across different subjects. Pupils have satisfactory opportunities to join a variety of extra-curricular clubs. Some pupils say they would like more clubs. Close and effective partnerships with other schools impact well on the health, fitness and well-being of pupils.

The staff provides caring and sensitive support for all pupils and their families. External support is quickly provided to improve the learning and well-being of all pupils and especially those with special educational needs and/or disabilities. The school does an excellent job in ensuring that attendance levels are high. Transition arrangements for pupils moving on to secondary school are thorough. This ensures that pupils are socially well prepared for the move on to a much larger school.

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	2

How effective are leadership and management?

The leadership team is providing stability for the school. It is also starting to address the weaknesses that occurred during its period of disruption. The acting headteacher has quickly gained the respect of pupils, staff, parents, carers and governors and is leading the school forward strongly and purposefully. Staff and governors share this determination to improve provision and morale is high. Because leaders and managers at all levels contribute to school improvement, they have an accurate view of its strengths and weaknesses. Middle leaders and managers are taking a more active role in monitoring pupils' progress, through an improved system to track attainment. Although there was less focus on monitoring the teaching and learning during the school's challenging period, a programme of lesson observations is now in place and this is showing improvements in the teaching. Many governors are new to the school. They are quickly settling into their roles and through training and support are beginning to formally evaluate the school's performance. Their monitoring visits, including a recent report on the new Nursery, are confirming more challenge and rigour in holding the school to account.

The acting headteacher and governors have ensured that all safeguarding procedures fully meet requirements and are robustly implemented. The school tackles discrimination well: harassment is not tolerated. The promotion of equal opportunities is satisfactory. It is no better because more able pupils are not always performing as well as they could.

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Community cohesion is promoted satisfactorily. Global links have improved considerably since the last inspection, through good partnerships with other schools. Multicultural weeks are often celebrated together as well as a recent focus on Eastern European art. Plans are in the early stages of developing a link with a school in a different area of the United Kingdom. Communications with parents and carers have recently been strengthened. Regular newsletters and the school's website keep them fully informed of what is happening in school. Their views on the school are also being sought more regularly.

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

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children start school in the Nursery with skills that vary each year but are mostly just below those expected for their age. Within a safe learning environment the children in Nursery and Reception make satisfactory progress. They enjoy planning their own learning and their ideas form the basis for future planning. The children are busy and active learners and behaviour is generally good. Most play well together, but a few find it difficult to share resources. Some children move fairly quickly from one activity to another. Reception children are proud of the way they can write simple words and sound out letters of the alphabet. By the end of Reception, most children are working at the expected levels for their age, although some aspects of language and mathematics are often lower.

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The organisation of Early Years Foundation Stage works soundly in the mixed-age class. There are satisfactory opportunities for the children to plan their own learning. Adults provide adult-led tasks,

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especially in literacy and numeracy. There is insufficient focus on extending the children's physical skills outdoors. Although there is a safe, well equipped playground attached to the small outdoor area, it is not used regularly. Resources are adequate for indoor and outdoor learning, but activities lack the breadth and stimulation required for children to make good progress. The questioning skills of the key workers are adequate, but lack the challenge to keep the children strongly engaged in their own learning. The recently introduced learning journals are used well to measure the progress children are making. They are a valuable resource but are not regularly seen by the children and their parents and carers to enable everyone to share and contribute to the learning and achievement.

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

All parents and carers who responded to the questionnaire agree that their children enjoy school, are kept safe and adopt healthy lifestyles. The inspector agrees with all of these judgements. Responses are also overwhelmingly positive in other areas of provision. A few parents and carers expressed concern that staff changes and absences have affected the school and particularly the quality of leadership. The inspector agrees that the school has been through a period of instability. However, one parent expressed the views of several parents on the current situation by writing, 'The acting headteacher and staff deserve commendation in doing a marvellous job in holding the school together'. The inspector strongly endorses this comment.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Hallbankgate Village 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 15 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 46 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	5	33	10	67	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	4	27	11	73	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	3	20	11	73	1	7	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	3	20	11	73	1	7	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	3	20	12	80	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	5	33	8	53	1	7	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	6	40	9	60	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)	3	20	7	47	2	13	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	4	27	8	53	1	7	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	3	20	12	80	0	0	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	2	13	11	73	1	7	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	2	13	10	67	2	13	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	4	27	10	67	1	7	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

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	51	45	0	4
Primary schools	6	41	42	10
Secondary schools	8	34	44	14
Sixth forms	10	37	50	3
Special schools	32	38	25	5
Pupil referral units	12	43	31	14
All schools	9	40	40	10

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 is for the period 1 September to 31 December 2009 and is the most recently published data available (see www.ofsted.gov.uk). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn term 2009 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

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.



28 May 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Hallbankgate Village School, Brampton, CA8 2NJ

Thank you for your help with the inspection and welcoming me to your school. I enjoyed being part of your small and friendly school community and finding out about your views. Your school gives you a satisfactory education. I agree with you that there are some good things about your school and other things that need improving. These are the main findings in the report.

You are keen to learn, enjoy coming to school and behave well. In the questionnaires you were very positive about these things. All adults in the school look after you well and make sure you are safe and you agree. Your caring attitudes contribute to the friendly atmosphere in your school. You enjoy taking on responsibility such as play leaders. Although the school council do a lot of charity fund-raising, it is not yet involved in improving things around the school.

Although you are all doing reasonably well in your learning, some of you could do even better. I have asked the school to help you learn more. Some of you will be given harder work. There will be more time for you to practice your literacy and numeracy skills in the topics you study. In Years 1 and 2 your targets are a bit too difficult to understand, so they will become easier to remember and marking will also help you to improve.

In Nursery and Reception it would be good to use the larger playground for running and moving about on your bikes and trikes. I have asked if some of your tasks could be a bit more exciting, so that you will want to stay playing and learn a lot.

Over the past year many of you have been taught by different teachers. The headteacher, too, has changed. Leaders in the school are working very hard to make sure that the school is stable and successfully helping you to learn better and make more progress. I hope you will all try to do your best work at school. Above all, keep up your excellent attendance record.

Yours sincerely

Mrs Sheila Mawer

Lead inspector

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