

Distington Community School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	133264
Local Authority	Cumbria
Inspection number	341365
Inspection dates	16–17 November 2009
Reporting inspector	Brian Dower

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	111
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Doreen Bedford
Headteacher	Ms Nina Heron
Date of previous school inspection	6 June 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by an additional inspector. He visited six lessons and held meetings with the Chair of Governors, staff, pupils and a representative of the local authority. He observed the school's work and looked at the 22 questionnaires returned by parents and carers, together with the 51 completed by pupils and the 11 completed by staff. The inspector also reviewed a range of documents including the school's analysis of pupils' academic progress and attainment, safeguarding information, improvement plans, records of classroom observations and the school's self-evaluation document.

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

- learning and progress in lessons; how well teaching is informed by assessment information and whether activities are matched to pupils' different learning needs
- the impact of care, guidance and support on improving outcomes for pupils, in particular those who are vulnerable and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities
- the ability of leaders and managers to secure improvements in provision and outcomes.

Information about the school

This is a smaller-than-average primary school. Pupils are predominantly from White British backgrounds and very few originate from outside the United Kingdom. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is high, as is the incidence of pupils eligible for free school meals. There are a few pupils who join or leave the school mid way through their primary education. The school has the Early Years kite mark, the Healthy Schools award, the Activemark and the Football Association Charter Standard.

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

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

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

This is a good school. Attainment by the end of Year 6 is average in English and science. It is below average in mathematics but improving. Given pupils' well below typically expected starting points when they join the school, overall achievement is good. The work seen in lessons and in pupils' books shows that learning and progress are good. This is confirmed by the school's assessment data.

Pupils understand how to stay fit and well and they eat healthily and take plenty of exercise. They say they feel safe in school. They enjoy their work and the time spent with their friends. Attendance rates are slightly below the national average and improving. They are in line with those of similar schools. Behaviour is good. The school is a harmonious and calm place to work in and the contribution pupils make to the school and wider community is good. The school is effective in promoting community cohesion. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage in their education because they have good personal qualities and their levels of achievement are good. The speaking and listening skills of a minority of pupils and their ability to use basic skills flexibly across subjects are less well developed. There is a small minority of pupils who find difficulty in sustaining concentration for extended periods.

Children make a good start in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Many enter the Nursery with skills and understanding which are significantly less well developed than expected, particularly in language, social and emotional development. Children progress well and by the start of Year 1 they have reached below average standards.

Teaching is good throughout the school and the curriculum is adapted to meet the needs of all pupils. This is particularly evident in the provision made for their personal development and well-being. The good care, guidance and support pupils receive, together with close links with parents and carers and partnerships with agencies and other schools, underpin the rapid gains they make in their learning. Safeguarding arrangements are well established and meet government requirements.

Leadership, management and governance are good. The school's capacity to improve further is good and is evident from the rise in standards since the previous inspection and better lesson planning to meet the diversity of needs in the mixed-age classes. The newly appointed headteacher has an accurate view of how well the school is doing and a sound understanding of what needs to be done to sustain the momentum of improvement. Improvements in the rigour of monitoring and evaluation have identified what pupils need to know and understand to raise achievement from good to outstanding. The school is now working to ensure that this information is translated into more demanding work for all. It gives good value for money.

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What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the pace of pupils' learning and raise attainment from good to outstanding by:
 - improving pupils' ability to use basic skills flexibly and well across all subjects
 - ensuring all pupils sustain high levels of concentration and perseverance with tasks
 - using monitoring and evaluation data to make learning tasks and targets more challenging and so stretch all pupils.
- Improve pupils' speaking and listening skills by:
 - greater use of open-ended questioning to get pupils talking through problems for themselves and explaining their own ideas
 - providing more opportunities for whole-class discussion
 - building more effectively on the good listening skills being developed in the Early Years Foundation Stage.

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

In such a small school there are likely to be significant variations in assessment and test results from year to year. The pattern of performance over time is a more reliable indicator of how well the school is doing and this shows that achievement is good. Pupils work well in group activities and independently. They make good progress in developing their information and communication technology (ICT) skills and can use these flexibly across subjects. They make good progress in their literacy and numeracy lessons. For example, the quality of pupils' writing in Years 5 and 6 and the pride they take in presenting it so well show that they are on course to exceed the recent national test results in English. A minority, however, do not have the ability to transfer these literacy and numeracy skills across the curriculum and in so doing, to raise attainment. The school recognises that a small minority of pupils cannot sustain concentration for long periods and that more needs to be done to motivate and engage them.

Pupils' personal development and well-being, including their social, moral, spiritual and cultural development, are good. They become confident young people who know right from wrong and understand that they live in a complex society where differences are respected. They make considerable gains in their social and emotional development. Speaking and listening skills are not so well developed and the school is aware that more needs to be done to promote class discussions and get pupils talking at length about their work. This is being done well in the Early Years Foundation Stage.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

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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Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
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	2
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

Teachers make good use of varied learning activities. However, information from monitoring and evaluating learning and progress is not always used with sufficient precision to ensure that learning tasks are challenging for every pupil. Teaching is good. Marking and the guidance pupils receive in lessons on how to improve are also good. Some of the marking seen in pupils' books was outstanding. Teachers are able to convey an enthusiasm for learning and the highly effective work of the teaching assistants supports them in this.

The school demonstrates good care and support. Each individual's learning, social and emotional needs are known by every adult. Curriculum provision is good and tailored to the needs of all. There are extensive extra-curricular activities which are well attended and these do much to extend pupils' understanding and enjoyment of work and enhance their personal development. There are occasions when teachers' explanations and questioning are too protracted for the concentration span of a minority of pupils and their attention flags. Opportunities are sometimes missed to get pupils talking about their own work and what they think of the quality of others' endeavours.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2

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The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2
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How effective are leadership and management?

Leadership, management and governance are good. All staff are ambitious for the school's success and work well as a team. They are effective in promoting equality of opportunity for every pupil. This is seen in the good partnerships the school forges with parents and carers and outside agencies to support vulnerable pupils and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities so that they make the same good progress as others. The school's quality assurance and risk assessment procedures ensure effective safeguarding systems are in place. The newly appointed headteacher has an accurate understanding of the school's strengths and what needs to be done to raise standards. She has improved the rigour of monitoring and evaluation. There have been significant improvements since the previous inspection in test results, in planning to meet the learning needs of all pupils and in the effectiveness of subject leaders. Forward planning is good but the milestones and success criteria to measure progress are not recorded in the working documents.

The school has evaluated its contribution to community cohesion and understands the context in which it is working. There are close links with a range of community groups beyond the school and plans are well advanced to create links with schools in this country and abroad which operate in different circumstances. Pupils get on well together and respect differences. The school promotes community cohesion very effectively. Governors know the school well and give generously of their time to meetings and a range of activities. They are very well led by the chair who supports the school in all its activities and asks the right questions about pupils' progress and achievement. The school is open to change and improvement. Barriers to pupils' learning are never given as an excuse for achievement not being better than good. They are there to be removed.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	2
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2

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

Early Years Foundation Stage

The school's good induction procedures enable children to settle quickly and soon feel safe, secure and well cared for. From very low starting points, children make good progress, particularly in their personal, social, emotional and physical development and their ability to listen to and respect the views of others. They learn to share and be sensitive to others' feelings and needs. They choose activities for themselves and take responsibility for small tasks. They play well on their own and with others and talk at length about what they are doing. Health and hygiene routines are established from the start, as are safe working habits.

Their sense of community and well-being is fostered by the encouragement they get to join in and make friends and to become involved in whole-school activities like assemblies and productions. The children's knowledge and understanding of the world around them is limited and their creative development lags behind what is normally seen. The school has accurately identified these as priorities for improvement. Teaching is good, as is the support children receive from all the adults who care for them. The learning environment is stimulating. There is ample space and good quality resources to enable the children to explore and learn for themselves in a range of different settings. Outdoor provision is good and plans are in place to improve it further. This stage in children's development is very 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

Parents are positive about the way the school cares for and promotes their children's academic and personal development. Almost no concerns were raised. Two parents questioned the recent changes to the way the youngest children enter their classroom and another concern raised was individual in nature and not reflected in any other return. A typical parental comment was,

'I know that my child enjoys school as she is always eager to get there. She is excited

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and enthusiastic about the work they do and any outings to support this. I believe this is due to the experiences and work offered and the care and enthusiasm of the staff.'

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Distington Community 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 22 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	13	59	9	41	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	14	64	8	36	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	10	45	12	55	0	0	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	9	41	12	55	0	0	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	13	59	9	41	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	8	36	12	55	0	0	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	9	41	13	59	0	0	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	9	41	12	55	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	11	50	11	50	0	0	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	8	36	12	55	1	5	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	9	41	13	59	0	0	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	7	32	11	50	3	14	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	12	55	10	45	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.



18 November 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Distington Community School, Workington, CA14 5TE

Thank you for the warm welcome I received when I visited your school. I found the two days interesting and I was impressed by your courtesy, your good behaviour and how hard you are working. I only wish I had had more time to see all the interesting things you are doing.

Yours is a good school. Standards by the end of Year 6 are at the levels expected for pupils of that age. The progress you make and your achievement are good. You also make good progress in your personal development and have the qualities needed to be successful in whatever you choose to do. You work well together and independently and you make good use of computers to help you in your learning. You say you feel safe in school and that you like your teachers. You describe them as being helpful, supportive and approachable. I agree. Your teachers and the teaching assistants work hard to give you the best chances and this is one reason why your progress is good.

The classrooms are bright and stimulating and you are fortunate to have such large outdoor spaces to enjoy at breaks and lunch times. The school provides you with many extra-curricular activities and you told me how much you enjoy them. These are helping you to grow and mature.

Your school could be even better than it is because many of you could exceed expectations and reach standards in your work which are better than those seen in most other schools. I have therefore asked that more be done to speed up the pace of your learning and raise achievement. I have also asked that you be given every opportunity to improve your speaking and listening skills. The children in the Nursery and Reception are developing these skills very well.

You can help in these things by continuing to work hard and supporting each other in the tasks teachers set you to do.

Yours sincerely

Mr Brian Dower

Lead Inspector

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