

Cummersdale School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	112107
Local Authority	Cumbria
Inspection number	301740
Inspection dates	27–28 June 2007
Reporting inspector	Gill Salter-Smith

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	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	67
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Terry Jackson
Headteacher	Mrs Gill Stables (Acting Headteacher)
Date of previous school inspection	1 September 2003
School address	Cummersdale Carlisle Cumbria CA2 6BD
Telephone number	01228 607530
Fax number	01228 607531

Age group	4–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

This is a much smaller school than average situated in a rural area on the outskirts of Carlisle. It is a popular choice for parents and takes pupils from a wide area including the city of Carlisle. A below average proportion of pupils are eligible for free school meals. Almost all pupils are from White British backgrounds. There are no pupils for whom English is not the language spoken at home. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is around average with no pupils having a statement of need. There are three mixed-age classes. Pupils' attainment when they join the Reception class is average. Over the past four years, a significant number of children, often with below average attainment, have joined the school at times other than the usual start in reception. The substantive headteacher is absent through illness. The current acting headteacher has very recently taken over from the previous acting headteacher, who had been in the role for almost two years. Both are teachers from within the school.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a good school. Pupils love coming to school and they are outstanding ambassadors for it. Standards of behaviour are excellent. Pupils are polite, well mannered and considerate of others. They feel safe and secure and they thrive in this small school. They are given many responsibilities that help them to be well prepared for their futures. They enjoy making a good contribution to the local community through their fund-raising activities and performances to various groups in the community. Most parents are very supportive of the work of the school. They appreciate the family atmosphere, good care and support and high expectations of the staff to ensure that their children achieve well. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education by the time they leave Year 6.

Pupils' achievement is good and by the time they leave Year 6, standards are above average. Good teaching helps pupils to make good progress and enjoy learning. Lessons are well planned and include a good variety of stimulating activities which pupils find challenging. Pupils understand the purpose of lessons but do not always take sufficient responsibility for improving their own learning through evaluating their own and each others' work to identify points for improvement. Provision for children in the Foundation Stage is good. The children benefit from working in a small group on many occasions. They enjoy learning both outdoors and indoors and they play happily with each other. Pupils continue to make good progress in Key Stage 1 and standards are average overall. Standards are above average in mathematics and reading but fewer pupils exceed the expected standards for their age in writing than in reading and mathematics because the purpose and style of writing is limited in range. This is in contrast to writing in Key Stage 2 which makes effective use of the broader curriculum to create opportunities to use different styles. The good work to raise standards of writing in Key Stage 2 has not been fully extended into Key Stage 1. Pupils make good progress in Key Stage 2 and standards are above average in English, mathematics and science. In particular, the standards of handwriting are very good.

Leadership and management are good. During this period of acting headship, leaders have monitored pupils' progress closely and accurately identified what needs to be improved. Actions taken have been effective in raising standards. Considerable improvements to the outdoor play area and the kitchens have enhanced pupils' enthusiasm for maintaining a healthy lifestyle. A vast array of sporting activities helps many pupils to achieve considerable success in local competitions. The school has improved well since the previous inspection. Pupils' good achievement has been sustained and improvements have been made in the areas the school was asked to tackle. The ability to identify what needs to be improved accurately and to take effective action shows that the school has a good capacity to improve further.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that more pupils reach the higher levels in writing in Key Stage 1 through strengthening opportunities for pupils to use a breadth of styles and purposes in their writing.
- Give pupils greater responsibility for improving their own learning through evaluating their own and others work using clear success criteria and identifying points for improvement.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Achievement is good and standards are above average. Standards of handwriting are a strength. Children start school in reception with language and mathematical skills in line with those expected for their age and good personal, social and emotional development. They make good progress because they experience a rich variety of well-structured play and learning activities which are well matched to the children's different needs. They reach or exceed the expected standards by the time they enter Year 1.

Inspection evidence and school assessment of Year 2 pupils show that pupils continue to make good progress in Key Stage 1 and reach above average standards in mathematics and reading. Progress in writing is only satisfactory because few able pupils are exceeding the standard expected of an average child due to limited opportunities to apply their writing skills across a range of styles for different purposes. The good progress pupils make in reading and in mathematics continue through Key Stage 2. Standards are above average by the end of Year 6 with pupils making more rapid progress in their writing than in Key Stage 1. Recently introduced plans to raise standards in writing have been effective and good opportunities are provided for pupils to apply their writing across the curriculum through Key Stage 2. Improved teaching approaches and resources in science have helped more Year 6 pupils to exceed the expected level than in the previous year.

The small number of pupils in each year group means that caution must be exercised in interpreting results of national tests. A recent dip in published results at both Key Stages 1 and 2 is explained by the number of pupils, often of low attainment, who joined the school at times other than the start of Reception. The school's data and inspection evidence shows that these pupils, and those who join the school in the Reception year and remain at the school until the end of Year 6, are making good progress. There is no consistent pattern to differences in the performance of girls and boys from year to year.

Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are well supported both in class and small groups. Consequently they gain confidence and make good progress.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils' personal development and well-being are outstanding. Pupils' consideration of others and their good manners are a credit to them. Older pupils work and play happily with younger pupils. The playground at breaktimes is a hive of activity, with most children organising and playing their own games. Pupils greatly enjoy school. They apply themselves well to their learning and most of them enjoy the wealth of after-school activities provided. A reflection of their enjoyment is the very high rate of attendance.

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good. Pupils find assemblies meaningful and older pupils welcome time for a period of inner peace and reflection. They learn much about cultures across the world through work in a range of subjects. Some pupils have communicated with children from different backgrounds from their own in another school in London.

Pupils feel very safe and secure in school. Incidents of bullying are extremely rare and dealt with effectively. Pupils are confident that staff will help if they need it.

Pupils have a very positive approach to staying healthy. Many enjoy the healthy school meals and younger pupils enjoy fruit every day. They know they need to take plenty of exercise and this is not a problem to most as they enjoy physical education lessons and extra-curricular activities.

Pupils make a good contribution to the local community and enjoy raising funds for charities and school funds. They work together very well in pairs and groups and they have good basic skills in literacy, numeracy and ICT. They are well prepared for their futures and the next stage of their education.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are good and result in pupils making good progress. Very good relationships between staff and pupils help to establish a very positive atmosphere in classrooms. Pupils are very keen to do well and they respond positively to well-deserved praise and encouragement. They tackle challenging activities extremely well and take great care in the presentation of their work.

Lessons are well planned by the teachers and a good variety of activities interests and motivates pupils. Pupils' progress is assessed regularly and this helps teachers to match tasks accurately to pupils' different abilities. The purpose of each lesson is made very clear to pupils. In some lessons the criteria on which they can judge success are not clear and there are limited opportunities for pupils to take greater responsibility for their own learning through evaluating their own and each others' work.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is good and meets pupils' needs well. The good range of visits and visitors, linked to subjects in the curriculum, bring interest and excitement to learning. Part of the school's strategy in raising standards has been to use these activities to develop pupils' literacy skills and to bring greater purpose to writing activities. This has been particularly successful in Key Stage 2 and, to a lesser extent, in Key Stage 1 where limited opportunities are provided for able pupils to extend their writing to incorporate a broad range of styles and purposes

A well-planned programme of personal, social and health education supports pupils' personal development and is enhanced by visitors to the school. Good links with the local church are helping to develop pupils' spiritual awareness.

An outstanding programme of extra-curricular activities, offered to pupils of all ages, supports their personal development and achievement. A wide variety of sporting opportunities enables pupils to develop positive attitudes towards sport and exercise. Many pupils, including those identified as more gifted and able, achieve considerable success and do well in competitions and performances both within and beyond the school.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Care, support and guidance are good. Good arrangements for health and safety are in place and safeguarding procedures follow current guidelines.

In this small school, the care and support of pupils is based on very good relationships between staff, pupils and their families. Parents actively support the school and make a very positive contribution to its daily life.

Children joining the Reception year are carefully introduced to the life of the school and older pupils are well prepared to move on to secondary education.

The school works well with other agencies to ensure that all pupils get the support that they need. Pupils' progress is closely tracked and systems are in place to provide additional support where it is needed helping lower attaining pupils and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities to achieve well.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good. The acting headteachers have provided a effective lead to staff and both leaders and staff work well as a team to maintain a secure and happy environment where pupils feel safe, are well taught and achieve well.

Leaders have a clear focus on raising standards and improving provision. They have been successful. They are well aware of the school's strengths and what needs to be improved because they analyse pupils' performance and monitor the quality of work in classrooms. Science in Key Stage 2 and writing were correctly identified as areas for improvement. Action taken to improve includes professional development, improved resources, more frequent monitoring of pupils' progress, well focused targets to support pupils' learning, more visits and visitors to stimulate writing and a more flexible approach to the curriculum. These actions have led to higher standards in writing and science in Key Stage 2. They have not had as much impact on helping pupils to exceed the expected level in writing in Key Stage 1.

Governance is good. Governors are very supportive of the school and are frequent visitors. They are actively involved in supporting staff and pupils. They challenge leaders and hold the school well to account. Finances are well managed and the school gives good value for money.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	School Overall
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	2
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	NA

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The behaviour of learners	1
The attendance of learners	1
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average to below average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Annex A

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

29 June 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Cummersdale School, Carlisle, CA2 6BD

Many thanks for making me so welcome in your school. I thoroughly enjoyed meeting you and talking to many of you. It was good to see how much you enjoy your school.

You have a good school. You are well taught and the staff know you and your families very well. They take great care to ensure that you get the support that you need to do well in your school work. You are truly great ambassadors for your school. I was impressed by your courtesy, good manners and consideration of others. It was a delight to see the way you play together at breaks and lunchtimes and to see how well some of you play with the children about to join the Reception class.

You really do work hard in lessons and apply yourselves well to challenging tasks. You achieve well in your work. Your handwriting and the care you take to present your work are a credit to you. You make the most of the many opportunities the school gives to you to do well in sports, music and many other interesting activities.

I think that more of the younger pupils could do even better in learning how to write interesting and imaginative pieces of work with really good punctuation and spelling. When you get the chance to evaluate each other's work you do this well and so I have asked your teachers to do this more often to help you have an even clearer idea of how you can improve.

I wish you well for your futures and hope that you enjoy the rest of your time at Cummersdale School.

Yours sincerely

Gillian Salter-Smith

Lead inspector