

Cummersdale School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	112107
Local Authority	Cumbria
Inspection number	337842
Inspection dates	21–22 October 2009
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	Community
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	64
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Mike Sanderson
Headteacher	Mr Gareth Jones
Date of previous school inspection	7 June 2007
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. The inspectors visited eight lessons, assembly, breaks and lunchtime. They looked at pupils' work and held meetings with staff and pupils and the chairman of the governing body. They observed the school's work and looked at a range of documents, including the school improvement plan, assessment information, safeguarding procedures, minutes of governors' meetings and monitoring and evaluation records. The inspectors also analysed the 52 questionnaires returned by parents and carers and 32 questionnaire responses from pupils in Key Stage 2.

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

- the steps taken to improve rates of progress in writing for all groups of pupils through the school
- how well the school has improved its use of assessment since the last inspection, so that pupils understand how well they are doing and how to improve
- how well the school is giving pupils the opportunities to learn about cultural, ethnic and social diversity in Britain and in the wider world.

Information about the school

This very small school serves a mixed rural and urban area close to Carlisle. Almost all pupils are from White British backgrounds. A broadly average proportion of pupils receive free school meals. The number of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is above average for a school of this size. Pupils are taught in three mixed-age classes. There is Early Years Foundation Stage provision for nine Reception children, who share a classroom with Key Stage 1 pupils. A well above average proportion of pupils join or leave the school at other than the usual times. There have been significant changes in the leadership and staffing over the past few years. A new headteacher was appointed a year ago.

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

Cummersdale provides a satisfactory standard of education. It has a number of good features. The school takes good care of its pupils. They are keen to come to school because they enjoy many of the events, visits and activities, such as the new nature garden and a wealth of sporting opportunities. Pupils attend school very regularly unless they are ill and attendance is usually above average. Behaviour is good and pupils feel safe in school. They have good opportunities to participate constructively in school life beyond lessons. Some pupils would welcome more responsibility for their own learning in lessons and to know how well they are doing. Parents and carers think well of the school. They appreciate the care the school takes in helping their children become more mature individuals. Standards have risen in science because there is more focus on opportunities for pupils to carry out investigations. Improvements made to the building and grounds have resulted in the school gaining Eco-Schools status. This has given pupils a greater awareness of environmental issues. The headteacher, staff and governors are all keenly focused on moving the school forward. Over the past three years the school has faced the challenge of frequent changes in leadership and staffing. It is now more stable and in a stronger position to move forward. Self-evaluation is accurate in identifying strengths and key areas for improvement, although monitoring and evaluation to address areas of weakness are not rigorous enough yet. However, the school is receiving training and support and the capacity for improvement is satisfactory. Pupils are making satisfactory progress from broadly average starting points. At times, in Reception there are not enough opportunities for structured play or for the children to make choices in their learning. Assessment in Reception is also weaker than in other classes. Attainment by Year 6 is broadly average. Science and reading were above average in 2009. Writing skills are lower and more-able pupils in particular are not doing as well as they should. Teaching is satisfactory with good and supportive relationships and effective management of lessons. Teachers do not always have high enough expectations of what pupils can write. In addition, curriculum planning does not identify enough opportunities for pupils to write in other subjects. Weaker marking through the school and inconsistencies in target setting is slowing progress, especially in writing. Good partnerships with other providers help to make the satisfactory curriculum generally broad and balanced.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise attainment in writing, particularly for more-able pupils, by:
 - making tasks more challenging and relevant to pupils

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- improving the development of writing skills across the curriculum.
- Ensure that all teaching is good or better to accelerate pupils' progress by:
 - making marking more developmental so pupils know how well they are doing and the areas they need to improve
 - setting challenging targets that are regularly reviewed with pupils
 - involving pupils in their own learning and in assessing how well they have done.
- Develop the role of senior leaders by:
 - ensuring that leaders accelerate the pace of change
 - ensuring that new initiatives are rigorously monitored and evaluated.
- Improve provision in the Early Years Foundation stage by:
 - making sure that there is a balance of teacher-led activities and choices for the children
 - ensuring that activities for structured play are stimulating and lead to good progress
 - developing an accurate assessment system for measuring attainment and progress.
- About 40% of 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 make satisfactory progress in lessons. In good teaching, pupils respond to stimulating activities with great enjoyment and good levels of concentration. Their behaviour is good, focusing their time and efforts on answering questions enthusiastically and rising to the challenge when completing their tasks. While pupils show a keenness to learn in satisfactory teaching, their concentration and enjoyment is not as strong. Some pupils remain rather passive in lessons that are strongly led by the teacher. Attainment by Year 2 and Year 6 is broadly average. In this small school attainment varies between cohorts. Over recent years reading and mathematics have often been above average by Year 6, with more-able pupils performing well in these subjects. Pupils are making slower progress in writing than reading, mathematics or science and few reach the higher levels of which they are capable.

Pupils work and play happily together, ever thoughtful and responsive to each other's feelings and needs. There have been no recorded bullying or racial incidents for many years. Pupils have developed good strategies to keep safe, healthy and fit. The achievement of the Healthy Schools Award and Activemark Gold marks the effort the school has made to ensure that pupils develop a healthy lifestyle. Outside agencies, such as road safety and the fire service, are used effectively to raise awareness in pupils of safety issues. Pupils are proud of the contribution they make to school life,

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particularly as councillors, sports leaders and members of the green group. These groups are very keen to talk about their contribution to a new nature garden in the school and a play area in the village. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness is good. It is heightened by regular assemblies, often taken by the local curate.

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?

Good, supportive relationships characterise all lessons. Classrooms are bright and welcoming places to learn. In the best lessons teachers plan thoroughly and match work well to the different ages and abilities in the class; clear explanations, high expectations and a good pace to lessons supports swift learning. Interest levels are kept high when teachers actively involve pupils in their own learning through discussion and exploring their own ideas. A good literacy lesson on the 'Tooth fairy' in Years 1 and 2 followed a visit from the dental hygienist. It provided good opportunities for speaking and listening and for pupils to extend their skills in writing story endings. Where teaching is less effective there is too much talking by the teacher and pupils become passive learners. Although they complete their tasks conscientiously, progress is satisfactory rather than

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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good. Support for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is satisfactory. It is most effective in classes where teachers plan tasks that are appropriate to pupils' different stages of development. In writing, teachers do not always provide enough challenge or relevance to pupils' interests, especially for more able pupils to do well. The quality and effectiveness of assessment is adequate, but with a lack of consistency through the school. Marking and target setting is beginning to help pupils to improve their work in some classes, but targets are not reviewed regularly enough with pupils for them to know how well they are doing.

The satisfactory curriculum is enriched by visits, events at school and by a wide range of clubs for all ages. The school successfully overcomes its relative isolation and its size by engaging with other schools and different providers. This has proved particularly beneficial in promoting personal, health and social education as well as a wealth of sporting activities. These partnerships are having a positive impact on pupils' personal development and their physical skills. During the inspection every class received tennis coaching. A weaker aspect of the curriculum is missed opportunities to extend writing skills across different subjects to help accelerate progress. The school modifies the curriculum appropriately for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Pupils are well cared for and flourish in the supportive and welcoming atmosphere of the school. Pupils who are new to the school are successfully integrated because staff are committed to their welfare and happiness. Productive partnerships are established with outside agencies to support the growing number of vulnerable pupils and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities.

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 new headteacher has provided stability for the school. He is starting to set the right targets to make the school better. Staff work well together as a team and their skills and ambitions are beginning to drive through improvements. A new system for tracking pupils' progress is being developed to help identify underachievement. Monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning by leaders is not sufficiently rigorous or systematic to be totally effective in addressing weaknesses. The school takes satisfactory steps to secure equal opportunities for all pupils. Governors are very supportive of the school and understand the challenges it faces. Many are new to their roles. They have recently attended training and systems are in place for them to begin to evaluate the school's

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performance more formally.

The arrangements made by the school for safeguarding and protecting children are satisfactory and meet government requirements. Work to promote community cohesion is satisfactory. Within the school there is a strong sense of community and good links are established with the local community and neighbouring schools. The school's 125th anniversary this year attracted many ex-pupils as well as most of the village. Communications with parents and carers have been strengthened with regular newsletters and the school's website, keeping them fully informed of what is happening in school. Opportunities are being developed further for pupils to extend their understanding of different religious and ethnic communities in the United Kingdom and the wider world. The school gives satisfactory value for money.

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	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	3
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	3
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

Procedures for introducing children to the school build strong links with parents and carers and help children to settle quickly into school life. Parents and carers appreciate how well children's welfare needs are met. 'We are very happy with the warm and supportive environment in the school. My daughter has built strong relationships with the adults who care for her,' is a typical comment. With good-quality care the children make satisfactory progress. They play together sensibly most of the time and are generally well behaved. They are keen to answer questions, but are still learning to listen to others and wait to speak. They are inquisitive learners, particularly when finding out about their senses. During an afternoon session they enjoyed tasting

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different fruits, smelling the herbs in the nature garden and describing different objects in a feely box'. Most were very sensible, waited for their turn and took delight in describing their experiences. By the end of Reception they reach average attainment, from starting points that are generally at the expected levels for their age.

The quality of provision in Reception is satisfactory. The organisation of the morning session does not always give the children a balance of adult-led tasks and opportunities for them to choose their own activities. Resources are adequate, both indoors and in a safe outdoor area, but activities are not always stimulating enough to promote good quality learning. Leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage are satisfactory. Although adults regularly assess children's learning, these assessments are not used well enough to provide reliable information on children's individual progress and attainment.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	3

Views of parents and carers

The large majority of parents and carers have a very positive view of the school. Parents and carers were very happy about the warm supportive environment that helps new children to feel welcome and to settle well. They feel that their children are happy in school and their individual needs are met.

The few concerns expressed mainly centred on behaviour and taking account of suggestions and concerns from parents and carers. One or two parents were concerned about the school gate not being locked when pupils are in the playground. The inspectors agree with the positive views expressed by parents and carers. Most of the concerns raised do not represent significant issues for the school. However, the issue over locking the school gate when pupils are in the playground is being addressed immediately.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Cummersdale School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school.

The inspector received 52 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 64 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	33	63	17	33	1	2	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	24	46	23	44	3	6	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	20	38	28	54	3	6	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	24	46	21	40	4	8	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	25	48	22	42	1	2	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	22	42	26	50	2	4	1	2
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	25	48	24	46	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)	20	38	21	40	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	26	50	24	46	0	0	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	20	38	21	40	5	10	4	8
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	22	42	17	33	7	13	2	4
The school is led and managed effectively	22	42	20	38	4	8	5	10
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	28	54	19	37	4	8	1	2

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.



23 October 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Cummersdale School, Carlisle, CA2 6BD

Thank you all for the very friendly welcome and help that you gave us when we visited your school recently. We enjoyed seeing you at work and play. Thank you particularly to the older pupils who completed the questionnaire for us. We agree with the comments you made about the school. We think you receive a satisfactory standard of education and some things in your school are good.

Here are the main things that helped us come to this conclusion.

- You enjoy school and behave well.
- You are settling in well in Reception.
- Adults in the school care and support you well and make sure you are safe.
- You are making satisfactory progress and reaching average standards by the end of Year 6.
- The school provides satisfactory and sometimes good lessons and a lot of interesting extra activities and visits.
- You have a good understanding of how to keep healthy and fit.
- Relationships are good and the school is a happy community.
- You work hard to make the school and your local community better.

We have asked the school to do four things.

- Help you to do better in writing and give you more opportunity to write in different subjects.
- Make parts of the teaching stronger to help you make more progress, including involving you more in lessons and helping you to know how well you are doing.
- Make sure that leaders and staff check that improvements are carried out.
- Give the children in Reception more choices in their learning.

We hope you will all try very hard to do your best work at school and especially to improve your writing. Good luck to you all.

Yours sincerely

Mrs Sheila Mawer

Lead inspector

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