

Vickerstown School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	112209
Local Authority	Cumbria
Inspection number	337867
Inspection dates	17–18 May 2010
Reporting inspector	Melvyn Hemmings

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	5–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	164
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Graham Hemsall
Headteacher	Mrs Michelle Phizacklea
Date of previous school inspection	14 November 2006
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. They visited 17 lessons or parts of lessons. Inspectors observed seven teachers and held discussions with governors, staff, parents and carers, groups of pupils and the School Improvement Partner. They observed the school's work, and looked at school policies, records of meetings, assessment information and curriculum planning. In addition, 17 responses to parents' and carers' questionnaires were received and analysed.

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

- how effectively the school is working to raise standards, particularly in writing
- whether pupils in Years 1 and 2 make sufficient progress and the extent to which all pupils are involved in self-assessment
- how successfully the school integrates the high proportion of pupils with
- a statement of special educational needs
- the extent to which the outdoor area for children in the Early Years Foundation
- Stage is used to promote their learning.

Information about the school

This smaller-than-average size school is designated as a resourced provision for pupils with a very wide range of severe learning, physical or medical difficulties and autistic spectrum disorders. These pupils are educated with their peers. The percentage of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, including those with a statement of special educational needs, is high. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is above average. The mobility rate of pupils is high. Most pupils are White British.

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

The school provides a satisfactory quality of education. The headteacher's clear vision for the school's improvement is focused on driving up standards and is shared by all staff. Action taken by leaders over the last two years has led to a steady rise in standards attained by the end of Year 6. Improved tracking procedures give a clear picture of individual pupils' progress throughout the school. Nonetheless, the monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning is not sharp enough to iron out inconsistencies between classes or to ensure that all teachers are fully accountable for their pupils' progress. Governors are supportive of the school but are not fully involved in holding leaders to account for its performance or in planning strategically for improvement. Self-evaluation is accurate and plans reflect what the school needs to do to consolidate success and gain further improvement. The capacity to improve is satisfactory.

Children make a good start in the Early Years Foundation Stage and achieve well from their starting points on entering school, which vary but are generally below those expected for their age. Pupils in Years 1 to 6 make satisfactory progress overall and by the time they leave school attain broadly average standards in English, mathematics and science. This represents satisfactory achievement. Strategies introduced to improve pupils' skills in writing and mathematics have improved their ability to write sentences that are constructed correctly and to use different calculation methods accurately. Leaders rightly acknowledge there is more to do to raise standards further, such as providing more opportunities to write purposefully at length across the curriculum and improving pupils' ability to solve real-life number problems.

Teaching and learning is no better than satisfactory, mainly because not all teachers consistently set work that closely matches pupils' individual needs. Pupils have positive attitudes to learning, though their involvement in evaluating for themselves what they need to do to improve is at an early stage of development. Curricular planning builds methodically on previous learning but does not indicate sufficiently well how links between subjects can be made to provide further interest and increase opportunities to apply skills. The care and well-being of pupils is at the core of the school's work and this is much appreciated by parents and carers. A particular strength is the way pupils with profound learning difficulties are successfully integrated so that they can take full part in school life.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise standards, particularly in writing and mathematics, by:
 - providing more opportunities to write purposefully at length across the

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curriculum

- improving pupils' problem-solving skills in mathematics
- strengthening links between subjects.
- Improve teaching and learning by:
 - ensuring that teachers are more consistent in setting work that matches the needs of pupils
 - making sure that teachers are fully accountable for the progress pupils make
 - fully involving pupils in assessing how they might improve their work.
- Strengthen leadership and management by:
 - sharpening the monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning
 - developing the expertise of governors in planning for the school's improvement and in holding the school to account for its performance.
- About 40% of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**3**

Pupils enjoy their learning, showing curiosity and interest in their activities. They collaborate well, as was seen in lessons when pupils in Year 5 were working in pairs to use unfamiliar words to write sentences. Pupils have satisfactory reading skills and can construct sentences with accurate vocabulary, spelling and punctuation. They are less skilled in writing purposefully at length to support their work in other subjects. A whole-school approach to improving pupils' mathematical calculation skills has proved successful and these are secure. Pupils are not generally adept at using these skills to solve real-life number problems. They can use information and communication technology confidently in a variety of contexts, including using the internet to find information. There is no significant difference between the achievement nor the quality of learning of different groups. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make similar progress to other pupils because of the well-targeted extra support they receive.

Pupils behave well and are polite and considerate. They contribute to school life by taking on responsibilities, such as being a member of the school council. They also make a useful contribution to the local community, including taking part in the Ulverston Music Festival. Pupils' awareness of the traditions and beliefs of other cultures is enhanced by work in geography and links with a school in Rwanda. They know they need to eat a balanced diet and take regular exercise in order to stay healthy. They have a good understanding of what might be an unsafe situation and say they feel safe and secure in school. Pupils' above average attendance and the way they are making satisfactory progress in gaining basic skills mean that they are soundly prepared for the next stage of education and for 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	2
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3

How effective is the provision?

Teachers plan their lessons carefully to build on previous work. This enables pupils to use what they already know and understand to support their current learning. They manage classrooms well, so that pupils are engaged in their work and little time is lost. Not all teachers consistently set challenging work that matches the abilities of different groups of pupils. Pupils are informed about their progress and how to improve through marking and by talking to adults. They are not fully involved in assessing their own progress and how they might improve. Teaching assistants are soundly deployed to support all pupils, particularly those with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Of particular note is the way staff work diligently to ensure that the high numbers of pupils who join classes during the year, many of whom have severe learning difficulties, are supported well to ensure that their progress is the same as other pupils.

The curriculum is extended by a variety of out-of-school activities, including sports, music and chess clubs. Visits to places of educational interest, including the Dock Museum in Barrow, and opportunities to work with a variety of visitors, extend pupils' skills and widen their horizons. There are established links with other schools that

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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enhance pupils' development. A good example of this is a residential visit to Bradford for pupils in Year 4, shared with a local school, that enables pupils to further their understanding of the beliefs and traditions of cultures different to their own. There are limited opportunities for pupils to refine and extend their literacy skills by writing purposefully at length across the curriculum. Leaders are exploring ways of making stronger links between subjects so pupils can better use skills developed in one subject to support learning in others.

The school provides a safe learning environment. Staff know the steps to take if they have any concerns about the well-being of a pupil. The support for pupils whose circumstances could potentially make them vulnerable is well targeted and effectively supports their development and learning. A good example of this is the establishment of a nurture group and the employment of a counsellor and social and emotional resilience worker that successfully promote pupils' well-being and self-esteem. Transition arrangements are good throughout the school, which is important given the high mobility rate of pupils. Established links with a wide range of outside agencies, including all branches of children's services, ensure that extra support for individual pupils is readily available. The school has been successful in improving attendance since the last inspection and it is now above average.

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?

Leaders establish ambition and drive improvement in a satisfactory way, by ensuring that the school focuses on the priority areas for development. The promotion of equal opportunities and tackling of discrimination is sound. Improvements to the procedures for tracking pupils' progress, since the last inspection, mean the school has a clearer picture of the performance of different groups of pupils and their contribution to school life. The monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning lacks sharpness. Lesson observations identify areas for development but subsequent observations do not rigorously follow up to check if these areas have been improved. Leaders actively promote community cohesion within the school and pupils from different backgrounds get on well with each other. The school is working to strengthen engagement with a range of groups beyond the school and the immediate community. All safeguarding requirements are met and arrangements are regularly reviewed. Training of staff in safeguarding, particularly child protection, is of good quality. Governors know the

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strengths and weaknesses of the school but are not fully involved in planning to bring about improvement. The school works effectively with a variety of agencies to support specific groups, for example pupils with profound learning difficulties. Relationships with parents and carers are good, with the school helping them support their children's learning in different ways and providing them with regular information about their children's progress.

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	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 make good progress because of the consistently good teaching they receive. Adults have a good understanding of the needs of children of this age and work well as a team to ensure that they are met. They provide activities that are interesting and practical and often based on children's own experiences. As a result, children are interested and engaged in all that they do. They are encouraged to make decisions for themselves and this contributes positively to their development as independent learners. Children behave well and work and play happily together. They particularly enjoy their role-play activities, as was evident when they were lost in a world of their own in 'the travel agency'. An interesting range of enrichment activities enhances the curriculum, such as seasonal walks around the environment and a visit to the local park. Good leadership ensures that assessment procedures are thorough to provide an accurate record of children's progress and achievement. Activities provided in the outdoor area do not always link sufficiently to learning that has taken place indoors and do not fully support development across all areas of learning. Children are cared for well in this calm

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and happy setting and support for children with special educational needs and/or disabilities is good. Parents and carers say that staff are approachable and keep them informed of their children's progress, for example through their learning journals, and how they can support learning at home.

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

Just over 10% of parents and carers completed questionnaires, which is a low return. The very large majority of these were positive about the school's work and the efforts of all staff. One comment was typical: 'My children enjoy coming to school and feel safe when they are there.' A few parents and carers did not agree that the school took account of their concerns and suggestions or helped them to support their children's learning. Inspection evidence does not support these views. A very small minority did not agree that the school made sure that their children were well prepared for the future. Inspectors judge that pupils are prepared satisfactorily for the future.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Vickerstown 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 17 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 164 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	11	65	6	35	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	9	53	8	47	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	6	35	10	59	0	0	1	6
My child is making enough progress at this school	4	24	11	65	1	6	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	5	29	9	53	1	6	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	4	24	9	53	1	6	2	12
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	6	35	10	59	1	6	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)	5	29	9	53	2	12	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	6	35	9	53	1	6	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	5	29	11	65	0	0	1	6
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	7	41	7	41	3	18	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	8	47	6	35	1	6	1	6
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	9	53	7	41	0	0	1	6

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.



19 May 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Vickerstown School, Barrow-in-Furness, LA14 3QS

Thank you for the friendly welcome you gave the team when we inspected your school. We enjoyed meeting you and seeing the many interesting things you do.

The inspectors judge that:

- children get off to a good start in the Reception class
- you enjoy coming to school and behave well
- adults look after you well and make sure you are safe
- many of you take part in extra-curricular activities
- in your questionnaires, you say you learn a lot at school and adults are interested in your views
- the headteacher, staff and governors are working hard to help you do better.

What we have asked your school to do now is:

- raise standards by giving you more opportunities to write in other subjects, in addition to English, improving your mathematical problem-solving skills and making better links between subjects
- make sure teachers always give you work that makes you think hard and involve you more in deciding for yourselves how to improve your work
- check the quality of teaching and learning more carefully and develop governors' skills in helping the school improve.

All of you are a credit to your school and can help it improve further by continuing to try your best in your activities.

Yours sincerely

Melvyn Hemmings

Lead Inspector

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