

Beckstone Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	134739
Local Authority	Cumbria
Inspection number	294162
Inspection dates	14–15 June 2007
Reporting inspector	Mr 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 on roll	296
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Gary McKeating
Headteacher	Mr David Warbrick
Date of previous school inspection	NA
School address	Eadie Street Harrington Workington Cumbria CA14 5PX
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Age group	3–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Beckstone Primary School was formed in September 2005 from a merger of Harrington Junior and Harrington and Garth Infant Schools. Extensive building work was undertaken on the site during the school's first year. There are deprived areas served by the school, as well as areas of average social and economic means. Pupils are from White British backgrounds and the proportion with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is above average. Pupils are taught mainly in mixed age classes. Attainment on entry to the school is below average.

Overall effectiveness of the school

This is a good school. There are some outstanding features. In a short time, and in difficult conditions, exceptional progress has been made in uniting three schools into one. This is recognised by parents who are fulsome in their praise of what has been achieved. 'My son is keen to get to school every day and is full of expectations of what the day will bring. He is never disappointed!' is the view of one mother and typifies the views of many parents. The school's capacity to improve further is very good.

Pupils' personal development and well-being are good. Their behaviour and attitudes are exemplary. Everyone gets on well together and pupils report that there is no bullying. The school has established excellent links with parents to support pupils in their learning, and with agencies and other educational establishments to guide pupils' academic and personal development. Pupils take on extensive responsibilities within school and make a significant contribution to the local community through charitable and musical activities. They have the personal qualities to make the most of the next stage of their education but could do better in applying their basic skills of literacy, numeracy and computer skills to support learning across the curriculum.

Pupils' achievement is good. Children enter the Foundation Stage with weaker skills than normally found for their age, particularly in their spoken language and emotional development. Provision in the Nursery and Reception classes is good. The children, therefore, make good progress and the majority reach or exceed the standards expected for their age by the time they start in Year 1. Given their individual starting points, pupils make consistently good progress throughout the rest of the school and, by the end of Year 6, reach standards that are average in English, mathematics and science. Any underachievement is quickly identified and measures are put in place to give pupils the support they need to achieve their potential.

The school is exceptionally caring and supportive of its pupils, particularly the most vulnerable. As a result, pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress and participate fully in out-of-school activities. Throughout the school, teaching and learning are good. Teachers' sensitivity to pupils' learning, social and emotional needs generate very positive attitudes to learning. Teachers have good subject knowledge and they plan their lessons well, ensuring that learning activities are varied but challenging to meet the diverse needs of mixed age and ability classes. Procedures are in place to inform pupils on how well they are doing and how to improve but they are not being applied consistently by all teachers. The curriculum is good and meets the needs of all pupils. The range and quality of enrichment activities are excellent. They fire pupils' enthusiasm and broaden their understanding of the world around them.

The school is well led and managed and has an accurate insight into its strengths and weaknesses. As a result, it is constantly adapting its provision to ensure that all pupils achieve as well as they can. The school has committed and experienced teachers, assistants and administrative staff who are giving the school the stability it now needs.

What the school should do to improve further

- Apply to all classes the good practice which exists for informing pupils how they can improve their work.
- Improve pupils' ability to use their basic skills in all subjects of the curriculum.

Achievement and standards

Pupils achieve well in their time in the school. From their below average starting point pupils make good progress and reach average standards by the end of Year 6. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities do well and make good progress towards their individual targets because of the good support they receive from their teachers and teaching assistants.

In the Foundation Stage, children make good progress and by the time they move into Year 1 the majority achieve the standards expected for their ages. In Key Stage 1, good progress continues and by the end of Year 2, standards in reading, writing and mathematics are close to average. The school has worked hard to improve pupils' understanding of mathematics and the school's assessments show that most pupils are now at the expected level in the subject and some are exceeding it.

Good progress is maintained in Key Stage 2, given individual starting points. The Year 6 test results in 2006 were average overall and exceeded the school's targets. The girls did better than boys and attained above average standards. The school's assessments indicate that test results could be higher this year. Boys are now making better progress and there has been an increase, compared to twelve months ago, in the proportion of boys and girls working at the above average Level 5 in English and mathematics.

Personal development and well-being

Pupils' personal development and well-being, including their spiritual, moral and social education, are good. Cultural development is satisfactory and the school is looking to improve pupils' understanding of the diversity of British society. This is a friendly and welcoming school and all pupils are keen to learn. Attendance is above average and pupils are enthusiastic about all that it has to offer. Pupils' behaviour and their attitudes to work are exemplary; they look after each other and get on well and say they feel safe and secure. Relationships are excellent. Pupils readily take on responsibilities, organising and running the fruit shop at morning break, for example, or acting as mentors to the younger children during play times. They are actively involved in local community activities through charitable and musical events and through conservation work. Pupils have a good understanding of how to keep healthy. They take part in regular sporting activities and eat nutritious and healthy lunches. Their preparation for future life is satisfactory. Although they have the self-confidence and the social and personal qualities to be successful, their ability to use basic skills across all subjects of the curriculum could be better.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Pupils achieve well because the quality of teaching and learning is consistently good across the school. Teachers' very caring relationships with pupils generate very positive attitudes to learning. Their strong subject knowledge, good lesson planning and sensitive questioning ensure that pupils clearly understand tasks. Effective class management and stimulating classroom and outdoor environments contribute to pupils' enjoyment of learning. Lessons generally move at a good pace and pupils work hard because they enjoy the interesting range of activities. Good lessons are marked by lively and stimulating teaching that challenges pupils to do their best. Less successful lessons result when the pace is too slow and tasks fail to fully enthuse and suitably challenge pupils. Teachers mark pupils' work carefully and pupils respond well to the useful comments that make clear how they can improve their work. This is seen in English but the quality of marking is inconsistent in other subjects. There is a similar inconsistent picture in teachers' use of learning targets for raising standards. Learning support staff are deployed well, enabling those pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities to make good progress.

Curriculum and other activities

The school provides a rich range of experiences for pupils, starting from the youngest age groups onwards. It meets the needs of pupils of all abilities, whether gifted and talented or with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. There are special projects; for example, in science, dance and technology, which give all pupils much to enjoy and especially appeal to the most talented pupils. The curriculum is enriched by a focus on environmental issues and makes a good contribution to the health and fitness of pupils. This happens not only through the physical education curriculum but also through a wide range of clubs and coaching opportunities. In addition, there is a good range of activities other than sports, for example, a choir and recorder groups, German and computer clubs, as well as residential experiences. The focus on developing a creative curriculum ensures that clear links between subjects are emerging. However, opportunities are often missed for pupils to develop their use of basic skills across all subjects.

Care, guidance and support

Pupils achieve well because of the good care, guidance and support the school provides for its pupils. Effective procedures are in place for safeguarding pupils' welfare, health and safety. Staff quickly identify pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and work well with a range of agencies to ensure that they get any extra help that is required. The care and support afforded to vulnerable pupils are exemplary and they are fully integrated into the school community and make good progress. The school has good procedures for identifying those who are underachieving or who need extra help and for providing the academic and personal support they need.

Leadership and management

Leadership, management and governance are good. The headteacher has given strong leadership over the period of amalgamation and has been the driving force to achieve a great deal in a short time. He has been well supported by able and hard working teachers, assistants and administrative staff. After only two years, one of them spent in the company of builders, the school is well established and the learning environment is vibrant and supportive. The school is clear about what has been achieved and it knows that the focus is now on raising standards.

Self-assessment is good. All who work in the school are committed to equality of opportunity for every pupil and this accounts for the smiling and open faces seen in classrooms and in the playground. Governors know the school well, have been supportive during the transition period and now play a full part in planning for the future. The school is well staffed, particularly with teaching assistants who are used well to support pupils in and out of the classroom. Teachers are experienced and committed to the school and this provides stability after the uncertainties of the last two years. The school has good resources and they are used well. Given the new nature of the school, it is not possible to judge its improvement since the last inspection but given its current educational direction, it has a very good capacity to improve in future.