

Bewcastle School

Bewcastle, Carlisle, Cumbria CA6 6PF

Inspection dates	7–8 June 2016
Overall effectiveness	Good
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Outstanding
Outcomes for pupils	Good
Early years provision	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- Leadership and governance have improved since the previous inspection. The headteacher has high aspirations for the pupils of the school and takes effective action to ensure that the quality of teaching is good.
- The curriculum provides a wide spectrum of rich experiences that broaden pupils' horizons.
- Children in the early years make a good start to their school lives. Expectations of what they can achieve are high and consequently children are well prepared for key stage 1.
- Parents are overwhelmingly supportive of the school. They value the role that the school plays in being at the heart of the community.
- Policies and procedures to keep pupils safe are effective.
- Pupils' behaviour is outstanding. Older pupils act as excellent role models for younger children. Pupils play and work together in harmony.
- Pupils are thoughtful and caring citizens of their community. They take pride in the work that they do to raise money for local charities.
- Teachers plan lessons that match the needs of pupils. As a result, current pupils make good progress in most subjects, especially reading and writing.
- Governors are effective. They have improved their skills since the previous inspection and now hold leaders to account for the impact of their actions.
- Pupils say that there is nothing they can think of to improve their school. They value their education and are proud of the school that they attend.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- The progress that current pupils make in mathematics is not as strong as that in reading and writing.
- Teachers do not always make explicit what they expect of pupils when they are writing in subjects other than English. As a result, the standard of writing in these subjects is not always good enough.
- Leaders' plans for improvement do not always clearly outline what actions will be taken and what success will look like.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching and raise achievement further by making sure that:
 - pupils' progress in mathematics at least matches that of reading and writing
 - the standard of pupils' writing in other subjects is at least as good as that seen in English lessons.

- Improve the quality of leadership and management, by:
 - making sure that plans for improvement precisely outline what actions will be taken to achieve success.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management is good

- The quality of the leadership and management of the school has improved since the previous inspection. The headteacher and governors know the strengths and weaknesses of the school well and are taking effective action to raise the quality of teaching and learning.
- Evidence in pupils' books, and from observations of lessons, shows that the quality of teaching has improved since the previous inspection. This is because the headteacher and governors place an appropriate priority on the professional development of all staff. The newly opened Nursery provision, for instance, has developed rapidly because staff have had good-quality training, including support from a local authority adviser. Opportunities to visit other local schools and observe good practice have also contributed to the rapid improvement in the Nursery provision.
- The headteacher, ably supported by a dedicated team of staff, has high aspirations for the pupils of the school. A significant feature of the headteacher's leadership is a determination to broaden pupils' horizons by providing a variety of rich and broad experiences.
- A strong sense of teamwork pervades the school. Leaders ensure that everyone knows their role. As a consequence, everyone is pulling towards the same aspirational goals for improvement.
- The school improvement plan has served as a useful tool to drive forward changes since the previous inspection. However, some current plans for improvement are not clear. This is because they do not outline precisely what actions will be taken and what success will look like.
- The headteacher has acted decisively to address issues identified at the previous inspection. A new system to follow up pupils' absence has contributed to improved overall attendance. Furthermore, the introduction and development of a new system to track the achievement of pupils means that leaders, teachers and governors now know precisely how well each pupil in the school is doing. As a result, pupils in danger of falling behind are identified at an early stage and appropriate measures are put in place to support them to catch up.
- Fundamental British values are very well promoted. Parliamentary outreach workshops, for example, enable pupils to learn about democracy when holding their own mock elections and debates. Likewise, pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding is a strength of the school. Pupils are taught about other faiths and engage in mature discussions, for instance, about the links between the beliefs of ancient civilisations and modern religions. Pupils take pride in the role that they play at the centre of the local and wider community. They take the lead in organising events such as coffee mornings to raise money for charities and relish their role in welcoming local residents to community lunches.
- A broad and interesting curriculum is enriched through a wide range of exciting activities. Wild camping, for instance, helps to develop pupils' independence and teamwork skills. Visits to the theatre in Carlisle and singing in the cathedral further enhance and broaden pupils' horizons.
- The headteacher, staff and governors ensure that the school plays a highly positive role in bringing the community together. A weekly toddler and baby playgroup, for example, gives parents the opportunity to meet each other and members of staff. As one parent typically commented, 'This is more than a school, it is the heart of the community.'
- Senior leaders and governors ensure that sports premium funding is used very effectively to promote healthy lifestyles and increase participation in competitive sports. Pupils take part in a wide range of sports, including football, athletics, basketball and gymnastics. Pupils acquit themselves very well during local competitive sporting events such as cross-country and local athletics tournaments. Similarly, pupil premium funding (additional funding for those pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals and those who are looked after by the local authority) is used effectively to ensure that identified pupils make progress that is at least in line with other pupils.
- **The governance of the school**
 - Governance has improved significantly since the previous inspection. This is because governors now use the information that they receive, from a range of sources, to gain a thorough insight into the strengths and weaknesses of the school. During committee meetings, they ask pertinent questions that challenge leaders and hold them to account for the impact of their actions.
 - Governors work closely with the local authority to ensure that they develop the necessary skills to undertake their roles well. Several members of the governing body, for instance, have attended training on aspects of their roles such as finance and safeguarding. The addition of an experienced governor from

a local school supports governors to undertake their roles with greater rigour.

- Governors keep a close eye on the school's finances. Along with the headteacher, they plan astutely to ensure that the school budget remains stable. They have a good understanding of how extra funding, such as the sports premium, is spent and ensure that that it provides good value for money.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Staff are extremely diligent in ensuring that pupils are very well cared for. All the pupils who responded to a questionnaire during the inspection, or who spoke to the inspector, stated that they feel very safe in school. All checks to ensure that adults are cleared to work with children have been undertaken and are recorded in the single central register. Safeguarding is an integral part of the school curriculum. Visits from external organisations help pupils to recognise and to understand how to keep themselves safe from sexual abuse and domestic violence.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good

- Teaching and learning are very well planned to enthuse and meet the needs of the wide age range of pupils in each class. Pupils' interests are celebrated and are often used to promote or extend learning. In a history lesson, for example, the class teacher seized on a pupil's interest in landmarks to generate discussion and independent learning about the Parthenon in Greece. Those pupils who spoke to the inspector stated that they enjoy their learning because 'teachers give us work that is just at the right level to make us think'.
- The teaching of spelling and phonics (the sounds that letters make) has improved in recent months. This is because senior leaders have taken decisive action to change how these aspects are taught. As a result, pupils are now using their spelling and phonics skills more accurately in their writing across all subjects.
- Leaders and teachers have cultivated an ethos of an enthusiasm for reading. Pupils, particularly those in key stage 2, read a broad range of texts; selecting books that challenge and interest them. One pupil, for example, explained that she had chosen to read an adaptation of 'The Tempest' by William Shakespeare because she loved the language being used. Furthermore, pupils state that, when they are interested in a particular author or topic, their teacher or headteacher will purchase these books for them, further demonstrating the commitment of the school to developing pupils' love of reading.
- In most subjects, teachers have high expectations about what pupils of all abilities can achieve. This is particularly evident in writing, where teachers make explicit what each pupil should achieve. The most able pupils, for instance, recently produced work of a very high calibre when inspired to write about Pandora's Box. However, when pupils write in different subjects, such as science, the quality of older pupils' work in particular is not as high as it should be. This is because teachers do not always make clear how older pupils' work should differ from that of their younger peers.
- Skilful questioning by their teachers encourages pupils to think more deeply about what they are learning. In a mathematics lesson, linked to their history topic, for example, pupils' learning moved forward rapidly when they were asked to consider how modern life in Bewcastle compared to Ancient Greece and record their findings in a Venn diagram.
- Teachers and teaching assistants keep a watchful eye, during lessons, on how well pupils grasp new concepts. They use this information well to intervene and offer immediate feedback and support to ensure that pupils do not fall behind. However, pupils' mathematics books show that teachers do not always use this information to add further challenge, at an appropriate point, for those pupils who are ready to deepen their understanding by applying their skills to problems or reasoning activities.
- Leaders make good use of specialist teachers to enhance the curriculum. Pupils' dance and drama skills are well developed because a visiting teacher expertly links learning from subjects, such as history, to their performances.
- Teaching assistants make a strong contribution to pupils' learning. This is because they work as a strong team with the teachers and leaders of the school. Communication between staff is a significant strength, ensuring that everyone is clear of their role during lessons.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare is outstanding

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding. Pupils have excellent attitudes towards their learning that contribute well to the progress that they make in lessons.
- Pupils are thoughtful and caring members of their local community. They are proud of the efforts that they

make to raise money for local charities, such as for wheelchair sports, by organising coffee mornings for local residents.

- Respect and tolerance for others is a significant strength of the school. Pupils get along with each other in harmony and rarely fall out. Pupils and parents alike are overwhelming in their view that bullying of any kind is not an issue at the school. This is because pupils are taught about the impact of their behaviour on others by adults who act as excellent role models.
- Leaders and governors promote healthy lifestyles very well. Pupils are given good opportunities to participate in a range of sporting clubs and compete with distinction in local competitions. The school has its own swimming pool that is frequently used by pupils and is made available to families outside school hours.
- Every parent who spoke to the inspector did so in glowing terms about how well pupils are cared for. One comment, typical of many stated: 'The care and dedication given to each individual child is excellent. Our children love going to school and feel very safe there'.
- Pupils are very proud of their school. Those who spoke to the inspector said that there is nothing that they can think of to improve things.
- Pupils have a good understanding of how to keep themselves safe, including when using devices that are connected to the internet.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding. During lessons and at breaktimes, older pupils display excellent attitudes towards their younger peers, supporting them with their learning and ensuring that they are involved in activities on the playground.
- Playtimes are an oasis of calm as pupils play with and alongside each other in harmony. Pupils have the realistic view that sometimes they fall out but state that they are usually able to resolve their own differences maturely. Pupils take full advantage of the idyllic outdoor setting by spending their lunchtime and breaktimes playing a range of sports or acting out their own plays in the 'mini theatre'.
- The headteacher has taken robust action since the previous inspection to improve pupils' attendance at school. As a result, overall attendance is rising rapidly and is now above the national average.

Outcomes for pupils

are good

- Owing to the small number of pupils in the school, test results vary from year to year. However, evidence seen during lesson observations, from pupils' books and from school data, shows that current pupils make good progress across the school in almost all subjects. In 2015, pupils left the school reaching standards that were broadly in line with the national average.
- Current pupils are making rapid progress in developing their reading skills. This is because leaders and teachers are now using tracking and assessment systems effectively to identify precisely what needs to be taught to plug any gaps in pupils' knowledge and skills. Those pupils who read to the inspector were able to do so with fluency and intonation. Pupils also display a good understanding of the texts that they read and are able to infer and deduce information well.
- English books show that pupils of all abilities are making good progress in their writing. The most able pupils, for example, use a wide range of sophisticated vocabulary, grammar and punctuation to develop their own 'voice' when writing. However, older pupils do not always apply their good writing skills well to other subjects. In 2015, the proportion of pupils achieving higher levels in writing was above the national average.
- In mathematics, pupils generally make the progress that is expected of them. In some lessons, teachers plan a diverse mix of activities to enable pupils to consolidate their skills and deepen their understanding. Pupils in key stage 2, for instance, work collaboratively, developing their problem solving skills, to solve missing number questions. However, pupils' books show that this is not consistent in all classes and all year groups. Some pupils, for instance, repeat similar activities when they clearly have a sound grasp of a mathematical idea. As a result, some pupils, particularly, but not exclusively, the most able do not always make equally strong progress as seen in reading and writing.
- Pupils who have special educational needs or disability make good progress. This is because leaders and teachers have high expectations of what this group of pupils can achieve and consequently plan activities that match their needs. Parents of pupils who have special educational needs, who spoke to the inspector, praised the school for the highly inclusive nature of all activities that are provided by the school.

Early years provision

is good

- Good leadership and teaching ensure that children, when they enter the early years, get off to a strong start in their school life. From starting points that are generally typical for their age, children make good progress across the early years, so that they are very well prepared for key stage 1.
- Leaders have taken positive action to ensure that the new Nursery provision at the school has rapidly developed since opening in January. Teachers and teaching assistants have undertaken a range of training to enhance their skills, including visiting other local nursery providers to observe best practice. The support of a local authority early years adviser has also contributed strongly to the professional development of staff.
- Learning in the early years is underpinned by excellent relationships between staff and children. Children listen attentively and respond to questions eagerly and with confidence, developing their social and communication skills well.
- Teachers and teaching assistants have high expectations of what children can achieve, particularly those in the Reception class. Children frequently join older pupils for lessons such as mathematics, where teachers ensure that activities are very well matched to their ability. As a consequence, children, particularly the most able, are very well challenged.
- Those activities that are led by adults grab children's attention and enhance their learning. Children in the nursery, for instance, enjoyed learning about 'one more than' and 'one less than' when the teaching assistant led a lesson based on the nursery rhyme 'hickory dickory dock'.
- The indoor and outdoor classroom environment are generally used effectively to provide a range of activities that sustain children's interest. Children in the Nursery, for example, learned about what living things need to grow, as they tended and watered plants in the school garden with the teaching assistant. However, some areas of the classroom, such as the writing corner, do not inspire children to take part in learning activities. This is because they do not have adequate resources nor is it clear what learning should take place.
- Children behave very well in the early years. They reflect the behaviour of older pupils in the school, who are positive role models. They display high levels of maturity and independence, accessing and using a range of resources imaginatively. A number of children were observed playing thoughtfully together as they shared model figures in the water area.
- Adults are vigilant and diligently ensure that children in the early years are kept safe at all times.
- Leaders know the strengths and weaknesses of the early years very well. The headteacher and governors have a clear vision of what action is needed for the further improvement of the provision. However, their ideas are not detailed in a strategic plan, meaning that they are not fully able to check the progress of their actions or gauge their impact.

School details

Unique reference number	112103
Local authority	Cumbria
Inspection number	10012182

This inspection 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	22
Appropriate authority	The Governing Body
Chair	Michelle Thorpe
Headteacher	Georgina Harland
Telephone number	01697 748662
Website	www.bewcastle.cumbria.sch.uk
Email address	head@bewcastle.cumbria.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	13 May 2014

Information about this school

- Bewcastle is much smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- The proportion of pupils for whom the school receives the pupil premium is lower than that found nationally. (The pupil premium is additional government funding for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and those children that are looked after by the local authority.)
- The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups is well below the national average, as is the proportion of pupils reported to have English as an additional language.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs is above the national average.
- A new Nursery provision opened at the school in January 2016.
- The school website meets statutory requirements.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed lessons in each class of the school.
- Discussions were held with senior leaders, members of staff, representatives of the governing body and a representative of the local authority.
- The inspector examined a wide range of documentation, including that relating to safeguarding, behaviour and attendance, school improvement planning and assessment information.
- The inspector spoke to pupils informally during the school day and observed them during playtime, lunch and before and after school. He also met formally with one small group of pupils to chat about their learning and behaviour and safety.
- The inspector heard a number of children read.
- The inspector took note of displays around the school.
- A range of pupils' books were checked with senior leaders.
- The inspector spoke to a small number of parents at the start of the day. The inspector also took account of the ten responses to the online Ofsted questionnaire (Parent View). The inspector also took note of the four responses they received to the inspection questionnaire for school staff and the six responses they received to the inspection questionnaire for pupils.

Inspection team

Martin Bell, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

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