

Fairfield Primary School

Gallowbarrow, Cockermouth, Cumbria, CA13 0DX

Inspection dates

7–8 October 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected
	This inspection:	Good 2
Leadership and management	Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils	Good	2
Quality of teaching	Good	2
Achievement of pupils	Good	2
Early years provision	Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Children develop a love of learning from a young age in the early years where they can explore and find out things for themselves. They achieve well.
- In each year group, most pupils make good progress. Most disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs usually make progress at rates similar to their peers.
- The quality of teaching is good. Teachers plan activities to capture pupils' imaginations and there are increasing opportunities for learning beyond the classroom.
- The behaviour of pupils is good. They settle well to learning and show respect for others during their playtimes.
- Pupils say they feel safe in school. They learn how to keep safe in their local community and other environments.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. They are mindful of those less fortunate than themselves.
- The headteacher has worked tirelessly to implement many new policies and procedures. All staff share her vision for bringing out the best in pupils' personal development and academic achievement.
- Leaders and managers, including the governing body, are focused on driving improvements. This has led to improvements in the quality of teaching and pupils' achievements. The school continues to improve.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Pupils do not always make the same rate of progress in writing, particularly in Key Stage 2, as they do in other subjects. There are inconsistencies in how well pupils check their work for errors.
- Pupils do not always respond to teachers' marking in order to improve their work.
- Strategies to check on the changes made to topic work and homework and the impact on raising achievement are at an early stage of development.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed teaching in 19 lessons, two of which were observed jointly. One with the headteacher and the other with the deputy headteacher. In addition, the inspectors made a number of short visits to lessons and listened to pupils read.
- Discussions were held with: school staff; groups of pupils; the headteacher; governors; parents and a representative from the local authority.
- The inspectors observed the school’s work and looked at a wide range of documentation, including safeguarding documents, the school’s procedures for gaining an accurate view of its own performance, its development plans, records of pupils’ standards and progress, documents relating to attendance and behaviour, and pupils’ work in their books.
- There were 100 parental responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) which the inspectors took into account alongside two telephone calls from parents. Thirty two responses to the inspection questionnaire for staff were also taken into account.

Inspection team

Naomi Taylor, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Sheila Mawer	Additional Inspector
Alistair Younger	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Fairfield is larger than the average- sized primary school.
- In September 2013, Fairfield Infant and Fairfield Junior schools amalgamated to form Fairfield Primary School. At that time, a headteacher and leaders and managers were appointed and a governing body was formed. There have been changes in staffing since the amalgamation.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils supported by the pupil premium is much lower than that found nationally. The pupil premium is additional government funding for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and children who are looked after by the local authority.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs supported through school action is lower than that found nationally.
- The proportion of pupils supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is much lower than that found nationally.
- Almost all pupils are White British.
- The nursery provision in the early years is part time.
- The headteacher has been proactive in gaining support from a National Leader in Education who is the headteacher of Dearham Academy.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching to outstanding in order to raise pupils' achievement further, particularly in writing, by:
 - embedding the school's recent focus on spelling, punctuation and grammar and encouraging pupils to check the accuracy of their written work across all subjects
 - ensuring the school's marking policy is followed, especially with regard to giving pupils time to respond to teacher's marking and learn from their mistakes.
- Improve further the effectiveness of leadership and management by closely monitoring the impact of the new curriculum and ensuring pupils build on their skills through topics and homework.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are good

- The passion and drive of the headteacher in bringing out the best in every pupil is clearly visible and shared by all staff and the governing body. She has tackled areas for improvement to successfully eradicate inadequate teaching and ensure that good teaching is now the norm.
- The headteacher has formed an ambitious senior leadership team with the capacity to drive further improvements. There are transparent systems and procedures for checking the quality of teaching and learning through regular lesson observations, work scrutiny and learning walks. Staff training is directly linked to the school improvement plan and priorities to continually improve the quality of teaching and raise achievement.
- Staff work well in partnership with external agencies to meet the needs of pupils whose current circumstances make them vulnerable.
- Middle leaders are determined to raise standards in their areas of responsibility. For example, those who met the lead inspector to discuss changes being made to the curriculum demonstrated how they are leading staff in the development of topic work to cover a wide range of subjects. However, at a senior level, criteria to measure the success of the new curriculum is not yet in place.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good and prepares them effectively for life in modern Britain. The introduction of opportunities for outdoor learning has ignited the interests of pupils and made learning real for them. For example, pupils are developing a greater understanding of their local and regional environments and the roles that they can play in their own communities.
- The primary school sport funding is used to broaden sporting opportunities for pupils, while developing the expertise of staff, using specialist coaches. This has, for example, led to increased opportunities in activities such as multi-skills, cricket, netball and skip and box 2 be fit. As a result, more pupils are taking part in a wider range of sporting activities to help them stay healthy and promote their well-being.
- The local authority provides light-touch support in recognition of the skills of the senior leadership team and their ability to develop their school. External support from a National Leader in Education has increased the opportunities for sharing good practice with several schools.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors bring with them a range of skills. Those governors who spoke with inspectors have an accurate view of the strengths of the school and are clear about actions in place to ensure ongoing improvements. New initiatives are being closely monitored by governors. They have a good understanding of data showing pupils' achievement and how this compares with other schools nationally. This enables them to effectively challenge the senior leadership team. They check the progress of pupils supported by pupil premium funding to make sure that spending has a good impact on improving their achievement. For example, they receive updates each half term on intervention work for this small cohort of learners. The governors approve the spending of the primary sports funding and review the impact on pupils' engagement in sport. They have an accurate overview of the quality of teaching and how it is directly linked to staff salaries. They undertake statutory duties, making sure safeguarding meets requirements so that pupils and staff are kept safe.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Most parents who responded to Parent View believe this is the case and all who spoke to the inspectors shared this view. Behaviour logs held by the school indicate that there are a few occasions when there is inappropriate behaviour but there are very clear procedures in place which are followed when this is the case.
- Through Parent View, a minority of parents expressed their views that the school does not respond well when they raise concerns. There was no evidence to suggest concerns are ignored although turbulence in staffing may, at times, delay responses from the school. One parent telephoned to inform the inspectors of how well the school resolved issues as, and when, they arose with her child.
- In lessons and around the school, pupils are courteous towards each other and the adults around them. They look smart in their uniforms and enjoy learning and playing together. One parent who spoke to the lead inspector was full of praise for how well the school had supported her son when he joined Key Stage 2 in September this year.

- Attendance is good and improving, as is punctuality.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good.
- Pupils have a good understanding of different forms of bullying and, for example, could explain why they should not make friends 'on-line'.
- The residential visits, which start in Year 2 through to Year 6, broaden pupils' horizons by experiencing outdoor activity centres and visiting cities such as Liverpool. This helps them to gain a good understanding of keeping safe in environments which are different to those they are used to.

The quality of teaching is good

- The headteacher and deputy headteacher have been relentless in driving improvements in teaching, resulting in the quality of teaching now being good overall and, at times, better.
- Classrooms are organised well and the content and timing of activities are planned effectively. Learning outdoors and trips and visitors to the school capture the imagination of pupils. For example, in Year 2, pupils were proud of their mathematical work displayed on the wall. It showed the leaves they had collected from a nearby woodland which they had then carefully measured. They clearly understood how their mathematical skills could be used to make comparisons and work out differences. This brought learning to life for them.
- Phonics is well taught and this was seen in the early years and Key Stage 1. For example, in Reception, children enjoyed 'action songs' to reinforce their understanding of the sound 'e'. After practising saying the sound, writing the letter and thinking of words with 'e' their structured play outdoors was a 'sound hunt'. The children clearly enjoyed this active learning which helps them to make good progress in recognising letters and the sounds they make.
- Key Stage 1 pupils who read to the inspectors demonstrated how they use their phonics skills to work out unfamiliar words. Most reading records are well used by staff and parents to record how much reading is being completed in school and at home, and to monitor progress.
- Developing opportunities for writing has been a whole-school priority, particularly for boys. Trips are used to stimulate pupils' imaginations and they are encouraged to draw on their experiences when writing. In Year 6, pupils were writing their own version of 'Flood land' by drawing on their own experiences from when their town was flooded. This highly engaged girls and boys alike and good progress was made with their writing.
- There has been a recent change in the teaching of spelling, punctuation and grammar which is already accelerating pupils' progress. However, pupils do not yet have well-developed skills in checking their own work before it is marked.
- Pupils' work is regularly marked and good written advice informs pupils on how to improve their work. However, pupils do not consistently respond to teachers marking to correct and revise their work to help them learn from their mistakes.
- Effective teamwork by teachers, skilled teaching assistants and volunteers ensures a high level of support for all groups of pupils.

The achievement of pupils is good

- Most pupils achieve the expected level in the Year 1 reading screening check. This is because teachers and teaching assistants are competent in the teaching of phonics (matching letters to the sounds that they make). Those pupils who struggle to read are given effective support and this leads, in most cases, to rapid improvements. Pupils enjoy reading a wide range of books and appreciate the reading areas in the new library.
- Pupils made good progress in Key Stage 1 in 2014. Standards in reading and mathematics were above average by the end of Year 2. Although a good proportion of pupils reached the higher levels in writing, there was a small group of pupils who did not reach the nationally expected levels. Nevertheless, this reflects good progress given the starting points of these pupils in the early years and the school is addressing this with tailored intervention work in Year 3.
- In 2014, the proportion of Year 6 pupils reaching the higher levels in reading was well above average. The proportion reaching the higher levels in mathematics was higher than the national average and, in writing, slightly lower than national expectations due to boys not progressing as quickly as girls. However, across all Key Stage 2 year groups in 2013/14 the vast majority of pupils made better than expected progress.

Work in pupils' books and current progress data show that the gap between girls and boys in writing is closing rapidly. This is a direct result of improvements in the quality of teaching.

- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make good progress because their different needs are quickly identified. Good levels of support from teachers, teaching assistants and external agencies helps each of them to make good progress in reaching their challenging targets.
- Pupil premium funding is effectively directed towards supporting the very few pupils who are eligible for free school meals so that gaps between their attainment and that of other pupils are closing rapidly. Year-on-year, the number of pupils in year groups is too small to make comments on their standards compared to other pupils in schools and nationally.
- The most able pupils are effectively challenged to aim high with a rolling programme of activities at the local secondary school to extend their learning. Like their classmates, they achieve well and some are tackling work at the highest primary school level. Pupils gifted at sports are given the opportunity to excel at sports camps run by professional sports coaches in the school holidays. This demonstrates the school's commitment to equal opportunities for all.

The early years provision

is good

- Children settle well into school life as a result of strong links between families and school staff built during home visits before they start school. Parents who were anxious about how well their children would settle in the Nursery told inspectors they appreciated the good communication between school and home during these first few weeks of this term.
- Most children start school with skills and knowledge that are typical for their age. The quality of the provision in early years is good and children make good progress. Most children reach good levels of development and are well prepared for moving into Key Stage 1.
- The early years provides a good range of activities for both indoor and outdoor learning. Many of the activities arise from the children's own interests and ideas and this ensures they are engaged and active learners. Their interest in autumn has resulted in imaginative pictures and collages of autumn leaves.
- In Reception, children were seen developing their understanding of long and short using socks. Adults asked a good range of questions to encourage children to explore shape, space and the use of measuring to compare different socks. Children were enjoying making comparisons although not enough time was given for some pupils to describe the differences in their own words and help children to develop further their mathematical language.
- The early years provides good quality care. Children know how to keep themselves safe. For example, children were building structures that they could safely walk on while others were sensibly using scissors to make their spiders. They demonstrate good levels of self-control and respect for others when work cooperatively together.
- The early years leader is relatively new to her role but already knows the strengths and areas for further development. She is strengthening the reliability of assessment information so that adults can respond more accurately to the learning needs of all children. Changes are planned for improving the effectiveness of learning journals which record activities in school and at home in order to enhance communication between parents and staff.

What inspection judgements mean

School	Grade	Judgement	Description
	Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
	Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
	Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
	Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	112131
Local authority	Cumbria
Inspection number	447750

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 of pupils on the school roll	380
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Dot Yoxall
Headteacher	Andrea Pattinson
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
Telephone number	01900 821133
Fax number	Not Applicable
Email address	admin@fairfieldprimary.co.uk

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