

Levens Church of England School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	112262
Local Authority	Cumbria
Inspection number	325562
Inspection dates	12 June 2009
Reporting inspector	Mr John Heap

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	73
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Julie Marsh
Headteacher	Mr Matt Foxwell
Date of previous school inspection	March 2006
School address	Levens Kendal Cumbria LA8 8PU
Telephone number	01539 560694
Fax number	01539 560694

Age group	4–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. The inspectors evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues:

- whether standards in writing and mathematics were high enough
- how well pupils are developing independent learning skills, particularly in literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology
- the quality of monitoring and evaluation and whether development planning is effective.

The inspectors collected evidence from school documentation; interviews with pupils, parents, staff and governors; observing lessons and other activities and analysing parents' questionnaires and comments. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated but the inspector found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given in its self-evaluation, were not justified, and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

Description of the school

This small primary school serves a predominantly White British population in an area that has very few signs of social and economic disadvantage. Few pupils are entitled to free school meals. The proportion of pupils who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities is broadly average. Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage are taught in the Reception class. The school has several awards, including Healthy School and Eco-school Silver status; Activemark. An after-school club is provided by the school on site. It is run by a private provider and was inspected separately by Ofsted.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a good school that provides good value for money. Parents and pupils are highly satisfied with the happy, 'family' atmosphere and the challenging learning environment fostered in the school. Typical comments from parents include 'I am very happy with all aspects of the education my children are experiencing...' and 'Teachers are highly supportive concerning my child's special needs.' The latter comment amply illustrates the school's effective approach to ensuring all pupils have equal opportunities and the way any discrimination is successfully tackled.

Pupils' personal development, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is outstanding. The main reasons for this are the high quality promotion of personal development and the excellent pastoral care. Pupils' moral and social development are particularly strong and, consequently, their behaviour and attitudes are exemplary. They thoroughly enjoy school and the above average attendance confirms this. Pupils are extremely helpful in the school and make an excellent contribution. They feel that their voice is listened to and actions taken as a result. A recent example is the introduction of chickens as school pets. Moreover, they express their views through regular questionnaires and class discussions. Pupils display an extremely good knowledge and understanding of the reasons for leading both healthy and safe lifestyles.

Achievement is good. Pupils enter Year 1 with standards that are above average. However, skills and abilities in early writing are below those in other subjects including reading. By the end of Years 2 and 6, standards are well above average. This picture has been consistently confirmed in the national test results. Pupils make good progress in their learning and respond well to the good teaching they receive. Writing standards across the school are weaker than reading and this means that English standards overall are above, rather than well above, average. The school is aware that writing is not as strong and there is currently a concerted effort to raise standards. Although it is early days, there are signs of improvement. Nevertheless, there are inconsistencies in the quality of the marking of writing that means that not all pupils are sufficiently challenged in the next stages of learning. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are supported well and make good progress towards their individual learning targets. Excellent attitudes to work and good academic progress mean that pupils are well prepared for their future learning and life.

Overall, the quality of education provided by the school is good. Typically, the good teaching is based on very strong relationships between adults and pupils and the good management of lessons. As a result, pupils know that they can confidently raise issues with staff when needed. They benefit from the good support on offer and learning is coherent and not disrupted. In the Year 2 class mathematics lesson, the teacher was able to develop a brisk pace because pupils were concentrating hard on remembering the numbers that make 10 and then a 100. Over time, basic skills are taught well and there is an increasingly strong emphasis on expecting pupils to be more independent. For example, in Years 5 and 6 pupils are aware of the targets they have that will help them to achieve more and the way that these are displayed encourages them to take some responsibility for their own learning.

The curriculum is very effective, in particular, the exemplary way pupils are given opportunities to develop personal skills, knowledge and understanding. An important strand of this is the very good provision of enrichment activities that includes: effective use of the local environment, out-of-lesson activities, visitors and a variety of visits, including ones that include overnight stays. These activities make an important contribution to the good development of pupils' confidence and independence. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities benefit from activities that are modified to support their learning. Booster groups are provided to support pupils of all abilities who need extra challenge. These groups benefit from specific programmes to improve basic skills, as in mathematics, and the close links with the local sports college.

Care, guidance and support are good. Pastoral care is underpinned by highly effective monitoring of behaviour and attendance. These actions have had a positive impact on improving pupil performance in these areas. Good links with outside agencies enable staff to have access to a wider range of knowledge and skills for supporting pupils who need them. Moreover, procedures and practices for safeguarding and protecting pupils are robust and meet government requirements. The school has a good method for tracking and recording pupils' achievements. However, the day-to-day target-setting and marking of work has some inconsistencies especially in writing. Nevertheless, in the main these targets explain to pupils the next steps in their learning.

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher and key staff have a clear vision for the direction of the school. Areas for development are accurately identified and the level of teamwork in addressing these is effective. Consequently, improvement since the last inspection is good and the capacity to improve further is also good. Measures of success in the school development plan are challenging, particularly the end of key stage academic targets. Monitoring and evaluation of the school's work is mostly accurate. However, observations of lessons are focused too much on the teachers' performance, rather than the quality of learning by the pupils. The promotion of community cohesion is satisfactory and an area that the school is keen to improve. The strongest elements are the links with the local community and the development of the knowledge and understanding of national issues through work in subjects such as history and geography. Furthermore, the school has a proud record of raising resources for charities outside the local area. Nevertheless, the school recognises that not enough is being done to help pupils understand global issues. A useful start is being made by developing close links with a Yorkshire school that has a very diverse population. Governance is good. Governors play an effective role in monitoring, development planning and challenging the school. This is most noticeable in the checks made on the prudent financial management and health and safety matters.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage is good. The variety of experiences ensures children enjoy learning and get a good start to their education. Arrangements for the children's induction are effective and, as a result, they settle quickly and adjust well to classroom routines. In this safe and caring environment

children make good progress. Consequently, their attainment improves from the broadly typical levels for their age on entry to Reception to above average standards as they enter Year 1. Staff are positive role models who provide a welcoming, exciting and challenging environment. Good curriculum planning ensures a good balance between teacher-led activities and the stimulation of independent learning through practical play activities. High standards of behaviour are set and achieved which means that children become more independent in their learning, both indoors and outdoors, both of which are used effectively. Children practice key skills, such as linking sounds and letters, and develop social skills effectively. Leadership and management are good. The leader has provided the impetus needed to bring about improvements, such as upgrading the premises and the curriculum. She also ensures that all staff are involved in the assessment of children's achievement and this promotes the good teaching that is lively, enthusiastic and interesting.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards in writing including improving marking so that pupils know how to improve their work.
- Increase the focus on pupils' learning when carrying out monitoring of lessons and other aspects of the school's work.
- Develop the focus on cultural diversity and the global issues of community cohesion.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate.	School Overall
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The effectiveness of boarding provision	NA
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	2
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	2
How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	2
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	2
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	2
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	1
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress	2

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	1
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2

¹Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average to below average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	2
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	3
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Annex B



15 June 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Levens Church of England School, Cumbria, LA8 8PU

On behalf of the inspection team, can I say what a thoroughly enjoyable and busy time we had in your school recently! Your warm welcome, courtesy and help were very much appreciated.

It is very clear that you and your parents greatly appreciate the work of the school. We believe that it is a good school with outstanding features especially in your personal development. In a short letter it is difficult to describe all the strengths but I would like to share with you some of the things that particularly impressed us. The children in Reception get a good start to their education owing to the effective teaching and variety of experiences provided by a strong team of staff. You make good progress all through the school and achieve results at the ends of Years 2 and 6 that are well above average every year. This is because the good teaching across the school promotes good learning and academic progress. Also, you are given a good range of learning activities. Your behaviour is excellent and so are your enthusiastic attitudes towards school. You have an excellent knowledge and understanding of the importance of leading healthy and safe lifestyles. The outstanding contribution that you make to the life of your school and the local community is a credit to you all. The school is well led and managed.

To make your school even better, I have asked the headteacher and staff to focus on three things in particular. These are:

- to make sure that writing standards improve even further so they are as high as your other subjects especially making sure that you know how to make your work even better
- to make sure that teachers monitor how much you are learning in lessons
- to help you learn more about other parts of Britain and the wider world.

I know that you will want to play a full part by continuing to do your very best. You are very good at contributing your ideas and this will also help.

Very best wishes and good luck for the future.

Yours faithfully

John Heap
Lead inspector