

# Levens Church of England School

Church Road Levens, Levens, Kendal, Cumbria, LA8 8PU

**Inspection dates** 30 April – 1 May 2014

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	Previous inspection:	Requires improvement	3
	This inspection:	<b>Good</b>	<b>2</b>
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a good school.

- Pupils' achievement has improved a great deal since the previous inspection. Standards by the end Year 6 were above the national average in 2013 for reading, writing and mathematics. Pupils make good progress from their starting points, including the most able and those with special educational needs.
- Teaching is good and leads to pupils making good progress over time. Learning is carefully planned to get the best out of pupils.
- Pupils enjoy school and behave well. They are well mannered and courteous. Pupils feel safe and secure.
- The headteacher, leaders and governors have been strongly determined to make improvements. They have succeeded in improving the quality of teaching, attendance and the achievement of pupils.
- The school has worked well in partnership with other local schools and the local authority to support improvements to teaching, leadership and management and achievement.
- Governors know the school well and play a clear role in holding leaders to account. They have improved their skills in holding leaders to account for the performance of the school.

### It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Teaching is not yet leading to outstanding progress. Marking of work in mathematics is not as helpful to pupils as it is in English.
- In the Reception class, outdoor learning and play activities are not as well planned as those for indoors.
- The few incidents of bullying and poor behaviour, and the actions taken, including communication with parents, are not always recorded rigorously enough.
- Systems to record pupils' progress do not always identify whether the most able are doing as well as they are expected to.

## Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed parts of five lessons. She carried out a series of short visits to observe the teaching of phonics (letters and the sounds they make), spelling and grammar, and lessons taught during afternoon school. All observations were carried out jointly with the headteacher.
- The inspector analysed pupils' work in their books during visits to classrooms. Further scrutiny of the workbooks of pupils in Year 2, 4, 5 and 6 was carried out jointly with the headteacher. The inspector listened to children from Year 1 read.
- Discussions were held with staff, pupils, governors and a representative of the local authority.
- Documents looked at included the school's summary of its view of its own performance, improvement plans, information on pupils' progress, records of pupils' behaviour and attendance and documents relating to safeguarding.
- Parents' views were taken into account through the 26 responses to the Ofsted on-line questionnaire (Parent View), the conversations held with parents as they brought their children to school and a letter received from a parent. The inspector took account of a survey of parents and pupils carried out by the school in March 2014. Questionnaires completed by eight staff were also considered.

## Inspection team

Gillian Salter-Smith, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- The school is much smaller than an average-sized primary school.
- Only a very small number of pupils are supported by the pupil premium. The pupil premium is additional funding for those pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals and those children who are looked after by the local authority.
- The vast majority of pupils are of White British heritage.
- A well-above average proportion of pupils are supported through school action, as is the proportion supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in English and mathematics at the end of Year 6.
- The school runs an after-school care club.
- The school has received support from Local Leaders and National Leaders of Education from Dean Gibson School, Arnside Primary School and Burton Moreword.

### What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching further, so that more pupils make outstanding progress by:
  - making teachers' marking of pupils' work in mathematics more helpful to pupils so that they know what to do to improve
  - ensuring that the most able pupils know what is expected of them so that they can do their very best at all times
  - planning outdoor learning for children in the Reception class as carefully as that for indoor learning so that children get the most from their time spent outdoors.
- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management further by:
  - ensuring that incidents of poor behaviour and bullying and the actions taken to resolve them are recorded more rigorously so that staff can use this information to plan even more effective ways to maintain good behaviour
  - refining systems used to record pupils' progress so that it is clear whether the most able are doing as well as they are expected to.

## Inspection judgements

### The achievement of pupils is good

- Pupils' achievement is good and has improved a great deal since the previous inspection.
- Levels of development when children start school in the Reception class are mostly typical for their age with skills in reading, writing and mathematics generally a little weaker than others. Children make good progress in the Reception class and most children achieve a good level of development.
- Pupils continue to make good progress in Key Stage 1. In 2013, standards increased significantly compared with the previous year. Overall, standards were a little above average with reading being the strongest subject. A good proportion of the Year 1 pupils met the standards required in the national test for early reading skills in 2013.
- In Key Stage 2, pupils make good progress. In 2013, standards were above average in reading, writing and mathematics. Standards in writing were particularly strong. Over the past three years standards have risen significantly.
- Work seen in pupils' books and school data show that pupils continue to make good progress and standards at both Key Stages 1 and 2 are on track to rise further.
- The most able pupils make good progress overall. The number of pupils reaching better than average standards is increasing in all subjects and at both key stages. However, on occasion this group of pupils could make even stronger progress in lessons.
- The pupil premium is used well to support individual pupils. The progress of these pupils is at least as good as that of others in the school. Because of the tiny number of pupils involved any comparison between the attainment of those pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and other pupils in the school would be statistically unreliable.
- Pupils with special educational needs make good progress. Their needs are identified early and the school works well with local providers to find the support that they need.
- Leaders and staff keep a close check on the progress of every pupil reflecting their strong commitment to equality of opportunity.

### The quality of teaching is good

- Children in the Reception class enjoy an exciting range of activities that help them to learn at a good rate. Staff work well as a team to check children's progress. Children's progress is carefully recorded in attractive individual journals. However, these are not readily available to parents other than at termly meetings with staff, so parents and children miss out on chances to celebrate their achievements.
- Indoor learning activities for Reception children are very well planned so that pupils have many chances to improve their early reading, writing and mathematical skills. Although children have access to the outdoors, the learning activities are not as extensive or as well planned as those planned for indoors.
- Pupils are settled and happy in class and ready to learn because staff know their pupils well and build positive and supportive relationships with them. Pupils respect their teachers; they say that their teachers make lessons fun and are always ready to give them the help they need.
- Pupils make good progress in learning early reading, grammar and spelling because strategies introduced to improve these skills have been very successful. Staff are adept in finding ways to make learning fun and memorable.
- Reading is encouraged widely across the school. Recent improvements to the library and the organisation of reading books, and the provision of places to sit and read quietly, have helped to encourage wider reading. Exciting reading materials are used effectively to encourage pupils to write well.
- Pupils make good progress in their writing because staff use a systematic approach to building pupils' skills. An exciting range of visits and topics stimulates some high quality writing. Pupils in

Years 5 and 6 wrote with great empathy and expression about events and the plight of individuals during the Second World War.

- Pupils make good progress in mathematics because staff follow common approaches to carrying out calculations; they encourage pupils to use practical equipment to help them to understand the underlying concepts and pupils frequently apply their learning to real-life problems.
- Pupils are settled and know what they should be achieving in lessons because staff make this very clear to them. The most able pupils make good progress because staff usually give them tasks that get the most out of them. Extra activities in partnership with other schools, for example in mathematics and science, help these pupils to achieve well. Occasionally, the most able pupils are not fully aware of what more is expected of them and so there are times when they do not learn as much as they could.
- In all subjects, staff check pupils' progress frequently and, as a result, plan learning carefully so that any gaps are filled. In mathematics, pupils improved their addition because of the extra chances they had to practise their skills, including those who used their skills to solve the real-life problem of having only £5.00 to spend on sweets to share at a party.
- Pupils' work is marked regularly. The advice and guidance given when marking pupils' writing make it very clear to pupils what they have done well and what to do next to improve. Good attention is paid to improving pupils' spelling, punctuation and grammar. Pupils act on this advice and improve their work as a result. The marking in mathematics, although as frequent, is not as helpful; the steps pupils should take to improve are less clear.

### **The behaviour and safety of pupils are good**

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils behave well in classrooms and around the school, including in the dining area. They enjoy sociable break times and make the most of a good range of play equipment. Pupils enjoy the activities in the after-school club.
- Pupils enjoy lessons and settle to tasks quickly. They are hard working, concentrate well and persevere with tasks. They discuss their work with each other sensibly and are sensitive when giving each other feedback on their work.
- Pupils take pride in their work and presentation of written work is good.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good.
- Pupils have been taught how to keep safe in many different situations, including when using the internet and modern technology.
- Pupils know about different types of bullying. Pupils say that incidents of bullying are rare. They know that staff will help if they have any worries.
- Most parents consider that behaviour is good and that their children are kept safe. Most, but not all, parents consider that any incidents of bullying are dealt with effectively. The school has acted on the concerns raised by parents and further training and support to recognise and deal with different types of bullying is planned for staff, pupils and parents.
- The rare incidents of poor behaviour and bullying and the actions taken, including communications with parents, are not always recorded in sufficient detail to be helpful in long-term review and planning to further improve behaviour and attitudes.
- The school has improved attendance and punctuality, so that attendance is above the national average and very few pupils are consistently late for school.
- Pupils take on responsibilities eagerly. An active school council and eco-team make improvements to the school, for example, by helping to raise funds for, and deciding on, new playground equipment.

**The leadership and management are good**

- The headteacher, leaders, staff and governors have been resolute and successful in their efforts to improve the school. At the same time, they have maintained the school as a happy place where children are well cared for and ready to learn.
- The quality of teaching has been improved effectively. Staff have benefited from training that is closely linked to the school's priorities and their personal needs. Staff have worked closely with Local and National Leaders of Education in local schools to improve teaching and elements of leadership and management. Senior leaders and staff, including middle leaders, are increasingly confident in leading training and improvements from within the school. For example, useful training on improving children's reading skills and habits was led by a teacher from the school.
- Leaders have an accurate view of how well the school is performing and work towards clear priorities set out in a succinct improvement plan. Priorities arise from rigorous checks on teaching and pupils' progress. Although systems to check pupils' progress are frequent and accurate, it is not always clear whether the most able are on track to achieve as well as they are expected to.
- Teachers are held closely to account by senior leaders for their performance. All staff, including teaching assistants, work towards individual targets that are linked closely to school priorities.
- The curriculum is well planned to meet pupils' needs. Topics are chosen carefully to be sure they interest pupils. Pupils are excited about the work they are currently working on based on the Victorians. Progress in basic skills of reading, writing and mathematics are planned and taught systematically. The school pays close attention to developing pupils' good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The 'family group sessions' (sessions with a mixture of pupils across the age groups, led by an adult) are used well to explore many issues that develop pupils' thoughtfulness and consideration of others.
- The school has improved its communication with parents. The school provides parents with detailed and frequent information on their children's achievement. Sessions have been held for parents to explain how they can support their children's learning in English and in mathematics. Overall, parents are supportive of the school's work and appreciate how it is improving. The school recognises that there is still further work to do to be sure that they reach out successfully to all parents.
- The local authority has worked effectively with the school to support improvements in teaching, leadership and management. It has checked on improvements made since the previous inspection rigorously.
- The primary school sports funding has been used well to increase the number of pupils involved in healthy physical activities, particularly outdoor activities.
- The arrangements the school makes to keep pupils safe meet current government requirements.
- **The governance of the school:**
  - Governors are increasingly confident in holding school leaders to account. Training has helped to improve the skills of governors in understanding the information provided on pupils' performance.
  - Governors are well informed about the quality of teaching and what actions are being taken to support and improve teaching. They support the school's rigorous approach to managing the performance of staff. They support the decisions made by senior leaders on salary progression.
  - Governors are kept well informed about how the pupil premium funding is spent and the impact it has on those eligible pupils' progress. They are very supportive of how the school is choosing to use the primary school sport funding.
  - Governors ensure that they take account of parents' views. They are aware of the need to improve how they take account of pupils' views.

## 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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	112262
<b>Local authority</b>	Cumbria
<b>Inspection number</b>	442380

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary controlled
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	61
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Ruth Crossley
<b>Headteacher</b>	Matthew Foxwell
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	9 October 2012
<b>Telephone number</b>	01539 560694
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