

Kirkby Thore School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	112181
Local authority	Cumbria
Inspection number	337861
Inspection dates	17–18 March 2010
Reporting inspector	Mr David Byrne

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	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	57
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Keith Robinson
Headteacher	Mrs Christine Wilson
Date of previous school inspection	October 2006
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out two additional inspectors. The inspectors spent the majority of time observing learning, visited nine lessons, and held meetings with governors, staff, groups of pupils, and representatives of the local authority and the attached Children's Centre. They observed the school's work, and evaluated a range of documentation including that related to school management, safeguarding, and pupils' attainment and progress. The inspectors also took into account questionnaires returned by 24 parents.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following:

- whether all pupils make sufficient progress and, in particular, the more able
- the quality and impact of assessment on the involvement of pupils on raising their performance and directing their own learning
- whether the school's improved performance is sustainable
- the accuracy of the school's self-evaluation.

Information about the school

This is a very small school. The percentage of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities varies from year to year and is currently average, although in some year groups half of the pupils are in this category. The percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals is below average. An above average proportion of pupils starts and leaves school at times other than the normal. The vast majority of pupils are of White British backgrounds and none speaks English as an additional language. The school has successfully gained the Financial Management in Schools (FMSIS) accreditation. There is a separately managed Nursery unit attached to the school. There is also a Children's Centre managed by Barnardo's attached to the school and is a key factor in promoting the school's links with a wide range of educational and health agencies to support a significant number of families within the community. There is a separately managed pre-school Nursery attached to the Children's Centre. These additional features of support for young children were not part of this inspection. The nursery and pre-nursery facilities are inspected separately and the reports can be found on Ofsted's website.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory and 4 is inadequate
Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

This is a good school with outstanding levels of care and guidance, which make a very positive difference to the lives of all pupils and many families. Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage are given an outstanding start. They are set up very well for their future education. In Key Stages 1 and 2, pupils benefit from good teaching and a lively curriculum, full of exciting experiences and opportunities. As a result, the majority of pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, enjoy learning and make good progress. Attainment is improving rapidly. From their starting points, achievement is good. Challenging targets set for pupils by the end of Year 6 are met and often exceeded. There is scope, however, for the more able to do better, most noticeably in writing. Currently, opportunities for pupils to apply their writing skills across all subjects and to develop a good awareness of what they need to do to improve are not consistent.

A caring and supportive ethos promotes good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, which contributes to good behaviour. A calm atmosphere pervades the school and pupils feel safe and secure at all times. Pupils display a pride in their work and have a natural curiosity and willingness to find things out for themselves. They develop a good understanding of the choices required to live safe and healthy lives and a good understanding of their local community.

The school works closely with parents and carers. Staff go the extra mile to welcome them and listen to their views in order to meet their needs. Good partnerships with local schools and the community enrich the quality of lessons and add relevance of school to the pupils' lives. Pupils enjoy a wide range of educational visits and visitors, which widen their learning experiences.

Caring and visionary leadership by the headteacher and staff have triggered a good improvement in the school since the last inspection. The school's evaluation of itself is accurate and given the current strengths in teaching, the curriculum and leadership, the school is well positioned to improve in future. Governance is satisfactory. While it is supportive of the school, it does not fulfil all aspects of its role; for example in ensuring that the school contributes fully to all elements of community cohesion.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise achievement and progress in writing by:
 - increasing opportunities for pupils to apply their writing skills to a wider variety of circumstances
 - refining the targets for pupils so that they are more consistently aligned to individual needs.

- Improve the role of the governing body so that:
 - it is more aware of all elements of its role
 - a comprehensive policy and plan is devised to promote all strands of community cohesion within the school.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Achievement is good because lessons are fun and pupils enjoy learning. Hard work and good behaviour are the norm during lessons. Pupils are particularly responsive to imaginative approaches to learning. During one lesson in which pupils played out an interview between 'journalists' and 'sailors' who had sailed with Francis Drake, pupils thrived on using their imaginations in order to explore important features of the Elizabethan explorers. Pupils are generally industrious and concentrate hard in order to attain the goals set for them. They take care in the way they present their work, which adds to their pride and sense of success.

Pupils make good progress from below average starting points in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Attainment at the end of Key Stage 2 is average and has risen rapidly with the current attainment in Year 6 confirming this. The majority of pupils learn at a good rate, but, despite this, writing remains a target for further improvement.

Pupils have a good understanding of how to live safe and healthy lives. They respond positively to good opportunities to participate in sport and the school's efforts to encourage healthy eating. Pupils feel safe and secure and say that one reason they like school is because of the good friends they make and the sense of belonging created. Close attention to reducing absence has resulted in good rates of attendance. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good overall with pupils being very aware of the needs of others and how to treat them. The combination of good personal skills, good work ethic and secure academic skills prepares pupils well for the next stage of their education.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
The extent to which pupils develop skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	2
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

Good relationships between staff and pupils and very clearly explained expectations underpin good teaching. Pupils are left in no doubt about what to do. Regular checks of pupils understanding keeps staff informed of how well pupils are learning so that adjustments are made to the lesson's structure. Staff know pupils well and use assessment effectively to plan work that usually extends the pupils' existing knowledge and skills. At times, the techniques for stretching the most able lack the challenge required to really make them think and work things out for themselves. Good liaison between teaching and support staff keeps pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities fully involved in lessons and gives additional support to help their academic and personal development. Marking is promptly done, but while targets are set for pupils to improve, they are not personalised enough to set out steps that are small enough to make a difference to learning.

Pupils respond well to a wide range of activities to develop their academic and personal development. Recent moves to adjust the curriculum so that it is more imaginatively planned is having a positive impact on the pupils desire to be involved in their learning as well as adding motivation and enjoyment to lessons.

The vast majority of parents and carers talk very highly of the caring and supportive ethos within the school. The inspectors agree with this view. The school goes to exceptional lengths to work with a variety of agencies to support families and pupils in need. As a result, absence is minimal and the achievement of pupils with significant barriers to learning is raised. Pupils are confident in the adults who help them and say they trust the support and guidance they are given. Care is taken to ease the start of school for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage and good liaison with the Extended School's adviser and staff from the secondary school eases the transition of pupils to their next stage of education.

¹The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

Since the last inspection the headteacher has worked very closely with staff, governors and the local authority to successfully raise achievement. A strong focus on professional development for staff, coupled with improvements to the curriculum, has boosted the quality of teaching and learning. Communication with parents has been improved and their involvement in their children's education, strengthened. The school has reassessed its procedures for promoting equality of opportunity and successfully narrowed most gaps in pupils' performance. A valued factor in this process of improvement has been good partnerships with the local community and other schools. The governing body is supportive of the school but its knowledge of some important elements of its role is unclear. For example, good attention has been given to promoting cohesion within the local community, but not enough recognition has been given to developing an understanding of the cultural richness and diversity of modern society. Care is taken to make sure that the school meets current safeguarding requirements. The budget is carefully planned to get good value for money and to provide an outstanding quality of outdoor learning facilities.

These are the grades for the leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	3
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children are given an excellent start to their education. They benefit from a vibrant and exciting environment, which stimulates rapid learning. Outstanding teaching, involving excellent teamwork between the teacher and teaching assistant, ignites the children's enthusiasm and creativity. As part of a theme looking at space, children thrived on creating their own pictures and making good efforts to describe not only what their character looked like but also the landscapes of their imaginary lands.

Because good attention is given to developing children’s spoken and written language, children develop the confidence to have a go at writing from an early stage. In all areas of their development, children do well. From starting points just below typical for their age, children make rapid progress to reach average attainment by the start of Year 1. They do particularly well in their personal and social development as well as in developing their creative and physical skills.

Each child is known by staff, and care is taken to find how to motivate each child. Assessments of progress are secure and good partnerships with parents and carers are established. Children's welfare and progress are carefully monitored and all aspects of safeguarding are in place. The provision has picked up significantly over the last two years under very effective leadership and management but is not yet to be reflected in the end of Year 6 results. Great care is taken to make the start to Reception as easy as possible and excellent links with the on-site pre-school nursery contributes to this.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation stage	1
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
The effectiveness of leadership and management in the Early Years Foundation Stage	1

Views of parents and carers

Parents and carers are largely very supportive of the school and rate it highly. The questionnaires received were very positive indeed and comment on the high quality of care and support the school provides. A small minority would like more information about their child’s progress. The inspection findings agree that the school provides a good quality of education and that its quality of care is outstanding. It is particularly effective in working with families in the community so that all pupils can get the best from their time in school. Regarding information about children’s progress, the school does do a lot to keep parents informed, but its welcoming and inviting environment enables additional information to be requested where more is desired.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Kirkby Thore School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school.

The inspector received 24 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 57 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	18	75	6	25	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	18	75	6	25	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	18	75	5	21	1	4	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	17	71	7	29	0	0	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	16	67	8	33	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	15	63	9	37	0	0	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	14	58	10	42	0	0	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	15	63	9	37	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	17	71	7	29	0	0	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	14	58	10	42	0	0	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	15	63	9	37	0	0	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	14	58	10	42	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	16	67	8	33	0	0	0	0

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools inspected between September 2007 and July 2008

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	39	58	3	0
Primary schools	13	50	33	4
Secondary schools	17	40	34	9
Sixth forms	18	43	37	2
Special schools	26	54	18	2
Pupil referral units	7	55	30	7
All schools	15	49	32	5

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above were reported in The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills 2007/08.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.■ The quality of teaching.■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships.■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



19 March 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Kirkby Thore School, Penrith, CA10 1UU

It was a privilege for me to join you in your school recently. You are fortunate to attend a good school which gives you an outstanding start to school life in the Early Years Foundation Stage and to set you all up well for moving on to secondary school. You work hard, take pride in the way you present your work and are making good progress in reading and mathematics as well as aspects of sport. Most of you write well but some of you could do even better and I have asked the school to find ways of doing this. You told me that you like school and I can see why. Your teachers care for you and give you interesting lessons that make school fun. The quality of care and support provided for you are second to none and results in many of you doing well in school. The staff and, in particular, the headteacher goes out of their way to help and support you all, not just with your lessons but also with any personal issues that you have.

I was impressed by your behaviour and the way you treat each other. You understand about the need to eat sensibly, take regular exercise and stay safe, all important in helping you to live happy and healthy lives.

Your headteacher is a caring leader who knows exactly what is best for your school. Together with all staff, much has been done to improve the quality of education for you in recent years. The governors are also very supportive, but could do a bit more to help the school; for example in finding more ways of giving you a better understanding of the wider world outside of your village and locality.

Please thank your parents and carers for sending me your questionnaires telling me how much they like the school too!

Yours sincerely

Mr David Byrne
Lead inspector

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