

Kirkby Stephen Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	112180
Local Authority	Cumbria
Inspection number	357056
Inspection dates	9–10 March 2011
Reporting inspector	Jean Kendall HMI

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	170
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr D Marston
Headteacher	Mrs Lynne Wade
Date of previous school inspection	28 June 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and two additional inspectors. Ten lessons were observed and all teachers were seen at least once. Inspectors held meetings with groups of pupils, governors, staff and the School Improvement Partner. They observed the school's work and spoke to pupils about their learning. They scrutinised the school's tracking of pupils' progress and its monitoring, self-evaluation and action planning. Inspectors took account of 70 questionnaires from parents and carers that were returned, 79 returns from pupils and 17 from staff.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work and looked in detail at a number of key areas.

- The standard of pupils' work in their books and their progress in lessons.
- How well pupils are taught basic skills.
- The quality of provision for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress.
- How effectively school leaders and governors monitor the school's work to bring about improvements and raise achievement.

Information about the school

Kirkby Stephen is a smaller than average sized primary school. The vast majority of pupils are of White British heritage. They are drawn from a wide rural area and many pupils travel to school by bus. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is below average. The proportion with special educational needs and/or disabilities is similar to the national average. One Reception class provides for learning in the Early Years Foundation Stage. The school has the Activemark.

The school was given a notice to improve in February 2010 because pupils were not making the progress that could be expected. Since that inspection, there have been changes to the leadership team with the appointment of a new deputy headteacher and other new appointments from within the school.

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?

3

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

3

Main findings

In accordance with section 13(5) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the school no longer requires significant improvement. It is providing a satisfactory standard of education and provides satisfactory value for money.

The inspection of February 2010 required the school to raise pupils' achievement by improving teaching and assessment and strengthening leadership and management. The school has successfully tackled these issues. Staffing is now stable after a period of disruption, teaching is improving and standards are rising. The headteacher is effectively driving through improvements with the full support of all staff and governors. The school knows its strengths and weaknesses and has satisfactory capacity to sustain the improvements.

Teaching is satisfactory overall with some good practice spread across the school. Teachers have introduced good assessment procedures and rigorous systems to monitor pupils' progress. These help teachers plan interesting activities that are increasingly well matched to pupils' learning needs. Teachers have worked hard to create a stimulating environment and have introduced more varied and engaging teaching approaches. However, some strategies have very recently been introduced and there are some missed opportunities to reinforce pupils' key skills in different subjects. In some classes, pupils have limited opportunities to apply their learning independently. The improvements in teaching are steadily raising achievement. The majority of pupils in the current Year 6 class are working at or above age-related expectations, bringing attainment close to the national average in that class. However, attainment across the school is still variable because of past disruptions to teaching and gaps in pupils' key skills. So, although pupils are making rapid progress in Year 2, their attainment is still below average.

Work in pupils' books indicates that the vast majority are now making at least satisfactory progress. The school takes effective action to promote equality of opportunity and ensure that groups who were previously underachieving make more rapid progress. Boys' reading and writing has significantly improved as a result of targeted intervention and more vibrant teaching. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities are also making at least satisfactory progress from their starting points. Those who are particularly able or are gifted and talented have good opportunities to develop their skills through specific activities and links with other schools and outside agencies.

The leadership team has been strengthened with new appointments and support from the local authority. Leaders and governors have a clear understanding of the school's performance and areas that require further improvement based on rigorous monitoring. The roles of leaders are developing well but there is a need to more clearly define responsibilities and lines of accountability to make optimum use of skills and expertise.

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The vast majority of parents and carers who returned questionnaires are pleased with their children's experience, stating for example that their children are 'happy, settled and enthusiastic about the learning experiences provided'. However, a significant minority feel that leaders take insufficient account of their views and their children could make better progress. A number also expressed concerns about behaviour. However, pupils' behaviour during the inspection was consistently good in lessons and in communal areas during break-times. Pupils have a good understanding of how to keep themselves safe and told inspectors they feel safe and well cared for in school. School leaders and governors have taken some steps to improve communication with parents and carers but this remains an area for further development.

Up to 40% of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise standards further in all year groups by:
 - - embedding the systems and teaching strategies that have been implemented recently and monitoring their impact
 - - ensuring the most effective practice is shared
 - - developing cross-curricular links and opportunities to develop key skills, creativity and independent learning across the curriculum.
- Clarify and develop leadership roles and responsibilities to make the best use of staff expertise and skills.
- Improve communication with parents and carers so that all feel they are able to engage fully with the school and are well informed about their children's progress and the school's achievements.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

3

Pupils' enthusiasm for learning has been enhanced through improvements to teaching in the last year. Pupils are enjoying a broader range of activities which challenge their thinking and help them to develop skills at a more rapid pace. Consequently, they are making satisfactory and sometimes better progress in lessons. The quality and presentation of their work have significantly improved since the last inspection. However, these improvements are recent and are not reflected in the 2010 standardised assessment results which show inadequate progress from pupils' broadly average starting points on entry to the school. Work in pupils' books and evidence from tracking of pupils' progress show that the current work in Year 6 is much closer to age-related expectations. Although attainment in Year 2 is currently low because of previous disruptions to teaching, the situation is improving as pupils make increasingly good progress in this class. Overall, achievement is satisfactory.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make satisfactory progress. The improved assessment procedures and stronger focus on teaching letter sounds are helping them to acquire skills at a faster rate. They make accelerated progress in some year groups where they receive good intervention and support from skilled practitioners. However, the support is spread too thinly in some year groups.

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Pupils' enjoyment is reflected in their above average attendance and full participation in the varied after-school activities. They particularly enjoy sporting activities and show prowess in physical education and local competitions. Their good understanding of how to keep themselves fit and healthy is promoted across all areas of the curriculum. Pupils make a satisfactory contribution to the school and local community but opportunities to develop leadership skills and take positions of responsibility have been limited of late. Pupils are very keen to expand these roles and plans are in place to help them do so. Nevertheless, they make a positive contribution through their good behaviour and positive relationships, being strongly supportive of the class rules they have helped to devise. Pupils clearly know the difference between right and wrong. They value each other's achievements and rightly take pride in their own. They have a good awareness of people from different backgrounds and experiences and help those less fortunate than themselves through fundraising. However, their opportunities to engage with groups from different backgrounds are limited.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

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

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

How effective is the provision?

Staff have shown determination and commitment to improve provision and raise pupils' achievement. Teaching is satisfactory overall with strengths in planning and assessment. Planning takes good account of pupils' prior learning and so activities are generally well matched to their needs and interests. Assessment and marking provides pupils with clear

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guidance and additional support if needed. This helps pupils understand how well they are doing and how to improve their work. However, school leaders recognise that teachers could do more to reinforce key literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology skills in different subjects. They have established effective practice in each key stage which can be shared and built upon. The most effective lessons provide pupils with interesting activities that challenge their thinking and keep them actively engaged throughout. In Year 6, for example, pupils are provided with relevant purposeful activities with good opportunities to discuss and take ownership of their own learning. Less effective lessons proceed at a slower pace, with less variety and fewer opportunities for all groups to be continuously engaged in learning.

The school offers a good range of after-school clubs, which broaden pupils' learning. Their experiences are enhanced further through visitors to school and trips out. Pupils thoroughly enjoy such activities; they demonstrate good attitudes to learning generally and rise to challenges. However, their opportunities to undertake research, collaborative problem solving, independent learning and creative activities are not consistently promoted in the taught curriculum.

The school's procedures for care, guidance and support are good. Teachers provide caring and sensitive support for all pupils in the classroom. The pupils whose circumstances make them most vulnerable and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities are very well provided for with external support if needed. Attendance levels are kept above average through good support for families with more frequent absence. The good arrangements for pupils moving through school and into secondary education help them settle quickly into new classes and settings.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	3
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	3
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

Leaders, governors and staff have shown determination to improve provision and tackle inadequacies that were identified at the last inspection. The ambition to secure further improvements and promote pupils' achievement is shared by all. There is a strong sense of teamwork and mutual support based on high ambitions for the children and the school as a whole. Staff have fully embraced opportunities for good quality professional development provided by the local authority. Teaching is improving with a more dynamic approach based on good quality assessment. Teaching is bringing about a steady improvement in pupils' progress, including those groups that were previously underachieving. All pupils are finding lessons more interesting but boys in particular are

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much more engaged. School leaders know where further improvement is needed and are taking appropriate action.

Governors have a good understanding of the school's current performance and priorities for further improvement. They know the community well and staff do their best to provide relevant and purposeful learning opportunities. Leaders are aware that the school could become more actively engaged with the local community and improve communication with parents and carers. Governors are keen to support the school in this. The school has developed collaborative arrangements with other local schools to enhance the curriculum and share effective practice. There are also effective links with outside agencies to effectively support vulnerable children and reduce risks. Safeguarding procedures meet all requirements to ensure that children are kept safe. However, some of the school's records could be better organised for ease of access and reference.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	3
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	3
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	3
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	3
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	3
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children in the Reception class are happy, active learners enjoying a full range of interesting, exciting learning opportunities. They enter the class with skills and abilities that are broadly in line with those expected for children of their age. They make good progress in their learning so that nearly all are working at expected levels by the time they enter Year 1 and some are working above expectations. This is because they receive good direct teaching and can reinforce and extend their skills in stimulating activities that they can choose for themselves. The well-organised, resources for both indoor and outdoor learning enable children to choose the direction of their own learning confidently and independently. They behave well and play cooperatively together; for example, in building a 'fire station' or helping patients in the 'health centre'. The language and literacy skills of the children have improved well since the last inspection, with a stronger focus on

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teaching letter sounds and regular opportunities to develop and practise reading and writing skills. Children are very proud of the way they can write their own names and simple words.

Good leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage have improved provision since the last inspection. Assessment has been developed and is being used successfully to plan relevant learning opportunities as well as reviewing children's progress. Partnership with parents and carers is good; they are warmly welcomed each morning to help their children plan their learning for the day. The good induction procedures help children to settle quickly and feel safe and secure. Children's welfare is given high priority so that their physical and social needs are safely met in a very supportive environment. The recent visits of the fire service, police and school nurse have added considerably to children's imaginative play and their understanding of how to keep safe.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2

Views of parents and carers

The vast majority of parents and carers who returned questionnaires feel that their children enjoy school and are happy with their children's experience. However, a significant minority would like to be better informed and feel communication could be improved. A number also expressed concern about the way behaviour is dealt with in school. Inspectors did not observe any negative issues with behaviour during the inspection and pupils told them they feel that teachers deal effectively with any incidents should they arise. However, inspectors endorse that communication with parents and carers could be improved.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Kirkby Stephen Primary 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 inspection team received 70 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 170 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	23	33	40	57	7	10	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	21	30	43	61	6	9	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	12	17	40	57	18	26	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	15	21	40	57	11	16	2	3
The teaching is good at this school	17	24	42	60	7	10	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	14	20	43	61	11	16	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	9	13	55	79	4	6	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)	12	17	44	63	5	7	1	1
The school meets my child's particular needs	16	23	42	60	7	10	2	3
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	5	7	34	49	19	27	8	11
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	9	13	47	67	6	9	2	3
The school is led and managed effectively	14	20	31	44	10	14	4	6
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	21	30	37	53	9	13	1	1

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

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	59	35	3	3
Primary schools	9	44	39	7
Secondary schools	13	36	41	11
Sixth forms	15	39	43	3
Special schools	35	43	17	5
Pupil referral units	21	42	29	9
All schools	13	43	37	8

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 are for the period 1 September 2009 to 31 August 2010 and are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2009/10 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Sixth form figures reflect the judgements made for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

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.



10 March 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Kirkby Stephen Primary School, Kirkby Stephen, CA17 4AE

Thank you for your warm welcome when we inspected your school recently. We thoroughly enjoyed speaking with you and were most impressed with your good behaviour and enthusiastic attitudes to learning.

We found that your school has improved since its last inspection and is now providing you with a satisfactory quality of education. Better teaching and good assessment is helping you all to make at least satisfactory progress in your lessons. There are some aspects of work that are good such as the care, guidance and support from your teachers to help you all feel safe and enjoy your learning. We think the new behaviour code is effective and we were really pleased to see you doing your part to make sure it succeeds.

Many of you told us you like your lessons and we agree that they include many exciting activities that you enjoy. You have a good understanding of how you can improve your work and do your best to produce good quality work. Your writing has really improved – well done! We were pleased to see that boys are now doing much better with their reading and writing.

Please thank your parents and carers for returning questionnaires. Most of them are very pleased with the school but a few feel they could be better informed about the school. There are three areas that we have asked the school to improve. These are:

- raise standards further by making sure all lessons are good so that you can develop your key skills effectively
- develop leadership roles to make the best use of the staff and their skills
- improve communication with your parents and carers so that they feel they are better informed about school and can approach school to talk about things like your progress.

Your headteacher, governors and all staff are working hard to build on the improvements they have made so that you all continue to enjoy school and achieve highly. We would like to wish you and everyone in your school every success in the future.

Yours sincerely

Jean Kendall

Her Majesty's Inspector, on behalf of the inspection team

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