

Leven Valley CofE Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	112356
Local Authority	Cumbria
Inspection number	357088
Inspection dates	7–8 July 2011
Reporting inspector	Sheila Mawer

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	58
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Steve Lawler
Headteacher	Mr Ian Nicol
Date of previous school inspection	30 January 2008
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. Eight lessons were observed and four teachers and teaching assistants were seen. Meetings were held with pupils, members of the governing body and staff. There was a telephone conversation with a representative of the local authority. The school's work was observed and documents examined included, the school improvement plan, records of pupils' progress, safeguarding procedures, minutes of governing body meetings and teachers' lesson plans. The inspectors also analysed the 22 questionnaires returned by parents and carers, plus those completed by pupils and staff.

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

- Whether the school's judgements that pupils are achieving well and making good progress are justified, especially in Key Stage 2.
- The extent to which assessment information is being used in lessons to ensure that all pupils are challenged in their learning and particularly in writing.
- How well the improved outdoor area is impacting on the progress made by children in Reception.
- The effectiveness of support and guidance given to pupils joining the school at times other than the usual start in Reception.
- How effectively the school is planning opportunities for pupils to experience the cultural, ethnic and social diversity in the United Kingdom and the wider world.

Information about the school

Leven Valley is much smaller than the average sized primary school, where pupils are taught in mixed-age classes. The school serves a number of small rural hamlets and villages. Almost all pupils are from White British backgrounds. A below average number of pupils are known to be eligible for free school meals. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is broadly average. There are no pupils with a statement of special educational needs. An above average proportion of pupils enter the school at other than the usual times. The school has achieved Healthy School status and the Eco-Schools Green Flag award.

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

Leven Valley provides a good education for its pupils. Several aspects of its work are outstanding. Leaders and managers, well supported by the governing body, have made significant progress in driving improvements and addressing issues from the previous inspection. Accurate self-evaluation and rigorous monitoring of pupils' progress and provision has provided leaders with a focused view of the school's performance and improvements needed. For example, leaders and managers are aware of the need to maintain and improve writing in the school. Sustainable improvements to the building are making a positive impact on the environment, and to pupils' progress and well-being. In particular, the progress of children in Reception has risen with the provision of a new outdoor area. Excellent partnerships with parents and carers, the local community and other providers, including the local authority have added considerable value to pupils' outcomes and provision. The school for its part values the excellent engagement of parents and carers in supporting the school. The school's motto of 'Everyone on board' is well and truly met. In this very positive climate, the school is in a strong position to continue to improve.

Parents and carers appreciate the excellent care, guidance and support their children receive. Typical of their view is, 'The children are very fortunate to learn in such a nourishing, safe, healthy and stimulating environment'. The school is very pro-active in seeking support for pupils who are potentially most vulnerable due to their circumstances and helping those who join the school later than at the usual times, to settle quickly and happily. Early interventions are impacting positively on the progress made by these pupils. Pupils are responding well to good teaching and assessment. As a result, they achieve well and make good progress across the school from their different starting points. More pupils are reaching the higher Level 5 in Year 6 and Level 3 in Year 2, particularly in reading and mathematics. Progress in raising achievement in writing has been slower. Marking and target setting to support improvements in pupils' writing are still developing. There are also fewer opportunities for pupils to develop their writing skills in other subjects.

Pupils are very keen to learn and their behaviour is outstanding. They enjoy school a great deal and show excellent care and consideration for others. Relationships are outstanding and pupils feel valued and safe. They are a credit to the school in the mature way they take responsibility for their own learning and contribute to the work of the school, local community and developing countries. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. While community cohesion is good overall, pupils have less contact with the wider cultural diversity in the United Kingdom.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Accelerate progress and raise pupils' achievement further in writing by:

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- increasing the numbers reaching above average levels in writing
 - providing more purposeful opportunities for pupils in the school to practise their writing skills across different subjects
 - improving the quality of marking so that pupils are given more detailed feedback on how to improve their work
 - helping pupils to have a clear understanding of their targets and how well they are achieving them.
- Improve pupils' awareness of the diversity of society in the United Kingdom by:
- developing more opportunities for pupils to interact with members of different communities outside of the local area.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**2**

Pupils say they enjoy everything about school. Their positive attitudes are reflected in a strong keenness to learn and their above average attendance. Excellent behaviour supports their good progress. Pupils are proud of their good handwriting and the presentation of their work. They confidently ask and answer questions in lessons. In a numeracy lesson, pupils responded enthusiastically to the task of devising tactics together to guess numbers up to 100, using the fewest possible questions. They rose to the challenge set by the teacher and showed excellent concentration and cooperation.

All groups of learners, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities and pupils who join the school later than at the usual times, make good progress from their very varying starting points from year to year in Reception, or when they join the school. Pupils' achievement is good. By Year 6, pupils' attainment has ranged from below to well above average over the years. This variation is because children start or join the school with skills that vary widely, due to small year groups. Attainment is well above average in the current Year 6, from their typically as expected starting points in Reception. In most other year groups attainment is above average. Pupils are performing particularly well in reading and mathematics. The school recognises that pupils need more opportunities to improve their writing.

Pupils are proud of the school's inclusiveness. They say there is no bullying because 'we all get along together really well'. Pupils confidently describe the strategies they use to keep themselves safe when using modern technology. They understand how to keep healthy and fit, choosing a balanced lunch and improving their fitness at break times. Pupils' good levels of participation and responsibility are evident in many ways. Older pupils, for example, support younger children in the playground, many willing helpers run coffee mornings for the local community and volunteers help with conservation projects, including redeveloping a sculpture trail nearby. The school council is still at an early stage in contributing to school improvements. Pupils have enjoyed raising funds for charities in developing countries. They are proud of their involvement in a fair trade organisation, which is extending their understanding of cultures across the world. Their good workplace skills are significantly enhanced when they take full control of ordering, processing and distributing fair trade goods to the local community, including managing the finances. As one pupil said, 'It gives us the feeling that we are actually doing a proper job'.

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Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

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	2
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	1
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 workplace and other 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

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?

Consistently good teaching is underpinned by excellent relationships. Lessons are managed well, with good opportunities for pupils to plan their own learning. Teachers often specialise in subjects across the school, so their skills can benefit more pupils. Good resources are used to make lessons fun, such as using sweets to create shapes with different lines of symmetry. Teachers' good subject knowledge is effective in the probing questions they ask and the challenging activities they plan. The use of skilled teaching assistants and other adults in the classroom is a strength of the school. Adults are well briefed before the lesson and they provide pupils with good focused support. Assessment is generally used well to support learning, especially in planning work for pupils of different abilities. Marking has improved, but at times there is less emphasis in providing pupils with detailed feedback on what they should do to improve their writing. Targets are set for pupils in reading, writing and mathematics. Pupils are not always familiar with their targets in writing or how well they are achieving them.

The broad and increasingly creative curriculum is planned and organised well for the mixed-age classes and different abilities. The structure of the curriculum around topics generally impacts positively on pupils' academic and personal development. At times, writing skills are not practised enough in some subjects and particularly when less challenging worksheets are used. Excellent partnerships with other schools and different organisations contribute strongly to a good range of stimulating activities, visits, visitors

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and clubs. Outdoor education, sporting activities and musical performances are a strength of the school and greatly enjoyed by all pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities.

In an exceptionally welcoming ethos, pupils receive outstanding care, guidance and support. Parents and carers appreciate how adults in the school place their children's well-being at the centre of their work. Any barriers to learning are quickly identified and actions are put in place, so that pupils can make the best of the opportunities they are given. Support for the above average number of pupils joining the school other than at the usual times is highly effective in helping them to settle quickly, make new friends and learn well. There are excellent partnerships with different local agencies to provide additional support for pupils most at risk. For example, the school nurse attends the first meeting with new parents and carers in Reception to give advice. Pupils in Year 6 are well prepared for the transition to a much larger secondary school.

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?

The high expectations of the headteacher are fully supported by everyone connected with the school. Staff work effectively together and their leadership roles have been strengthened. They now actively contribute to self-evaluation, tackling areas for improvement and monitoring teaching and learning. The school strongly promotes equal opportunities for all pupils and there is no discrimination. Outstanding care and support and thorough systems for tracking progress helps all pupils to make the best of their different skills and achieve well. The governing body plays an integral role in the school's drive for improvement. It ensures that safeguarding procedures fully meet government requirements. Through the rigorous audits of health and safety arrangements, the governing body ensures that all staff have a good understanding of safety management and that their training is up to date. The governing body is increasingly involved in the school's self-evaluation through its links with subject leaders and by monitoring the quality of teaching and learning. Currently, members of the governing body are evaluating the impact of the new outdoor area on the progress made by children in Reception.

Parents and carers are heavily involved in the school. Their views about different aspects of school life are fully analysed and acted upon. They are exceptionally well-informed about their children's progress. The outstanding partnership between the school, the governing body and parents and carers is reflected in high levels of support for school activities, and the raising of substantial funds to improve resources. Excellent partnerships and commitment to other schools and organisations provide valuable experiences for

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pupils that the school alone would find difficult to sustain. It enables community cohesion to be promoted well within the school and the local area. Through fundraising and fair trade initiatives the school makes a strong contribution to some international communities. The school recognises the need to broaden its contact with different communities within the United Kingdom.

These are the grades for 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	2
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	1
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	1
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	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Early Years Foundation Stage

Provision is good. It has been significantly enriched by an exciting outdoor area, which provides children with excellent opportunities for imaginative play. Resources indoors do not always provide the same quality, breadth and stimulation for children to learn exceptionally well. Children each day make their own choices for learning in their planning sheets. These activities are balanced well with adult-led tasks. With generous staffing levels and excellent support to meet individual needs, children make good progress from their different starting points. The current intake entered the Early Years Foundation Stage with skills that were in line with those expected for their age and are now working above expectations. They are well equipped to do well in Year 1.

Children quickly settle into daily routines because they are well prepared for joining the school. They follow the examples set by their older classmates in Years 1 and 2, who are positive role models. When pre-school children visited during the inspection, the Reception children displayed exceptional care and responsibility in showing them how to join in activities. Children in Reception show good levels of independence in initiating their own learning and working harmoniously together. In the writing corner, for example, two children performed a variety of different roles as teachers, including writing a letter to parents about a trip up Great Gable, a mountain in the Lake District.

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Good leadership and management and outstanding relationships with adults ensure that children's welfare and safety receive the highest priority. Regular planning meetings are used to continue to enhance learning. Recently the children enjoyed a 'work week', when a range of visitors, including a farmer and female police officer, helped them to appreciate the wider world. Children's progress is carefully recorded through good assessment, so work can be tailored to individual needs. Learning journals are used to show children's individual progress. This valuable evidence is not shared enough with parents and carers or the children.

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

About a third of parents and carers returned the questionnaire. Almost all were extremely positive about all aspects of the school. Many commented on the strong teaching, the stimulating environment, the wealth of opportunities within the curriculum and above all the exceptionally caring support and guidance their children receive. Inspection evidence confirmed these views in the good judgements made on teaching and the curriculum and on the outstanding care, guidance and support.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Leven Valley CofE 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 22 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 58 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	16	73	6	27	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	17	77	3	14	0	0	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	17	77	5	23	0	0	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	16	73	5	23	1	5	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	17	77	4	18	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	16	73	5	23	0	0	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	17	77	5	23	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)	19	86	3	14	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	15	68	6	27	0	0	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	14	64	6	27	0	0	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	13	59	8	36	0	0	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	16	73	5	23	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	17	77	5	23	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

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	46	48	6	0
Primary schools	6	47	40	7
Secondary schools	12	39	38	11
Sixth forms	13	42	41	3
Special schools	28	49	19	4
Pupil referral units	14	45	31	10
All schools	10	46	37	7

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 2010 to 31 December 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 2010/11 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.



11 July 2011

Dear Pupils,

Inspection of Leven Valley CofE Primary School, Ulverston, LA12 8QF

Thank you all for the very friendly welcome you gave us when we inspected your school recently. A particular thanks to the school council and Year 6 pupils who gave up their lunch time to talk with me about the school and behaved in such a sensible and mature way. The questionnaires that older pupils completed were very positive. They told us how much you enjoy school and feel safe. I am writing to tell you that you go to a good school and I am pleased that your parents and carers think so too. These are some of the things that the school does really well.

- Adults provide you with excellent care, guidance and support.
- You all work very hard to make good progress. It was lovely to see the great effort older pupils put into their investigations with numbers and how well children in Reception are writing their own sentences really well.
- You all show a great deal of care for others and your behaviour is excellent. I know how proud your teachers were when you all looked after the pre-school children on their visit and made them so welcome.
- Adults in the school are teaching you well and providing a good curriculum for you to learn lots of new things. Even though there are different ages in the classes, you are given work that makes you think hard.
- Your headteacher and the governing body are leading the school well and making it successful. I know how much you all appreciate the improvements to the classrooms and the wonderful outdoor area.
- The teachers really appreciate the way your parents and carers are helping the school to get better through their excellent support.

I have asked the school to make a few changes in the way that writing is taught, so that you can make more progress. I know you will all continue to improve your writing by working hard. I have also asked the school to give you more opportunities to have contact with different communities that live further away from your beautiful part of the Lake District. Good luck to you all. I know you will all continue to make sure that 'everyone stays on board' in your lovely school.

Yours sincerely

Sheila Mawer

Lead inspector

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