

Storth CofE School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	112265
Local authority	Cumbria
Inspection number	378449
Inspection dates	25–26 June 2012
Lead inspector	Marie Cordey

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	53
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Steve Nelson
Headteacher	Alison Charlesworth
Date of previous school inspection	8 February 2007
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Introduction

Inspection team

Marie Cordey

Additional Inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. The inspector observed four teachers and one senior teaching assistant, visited seven lessons, six of which were joint observations with the headteacher. In addition, the inspector made other more brief visits to lessons and also heard pupils reading. Meetings were held with representatives from the governing body, members of staff and groups of pupils. The inspector observed the school's work, and looked at the self-evaluation evidence, school improvement plans, safeguarding documentation, and records of internal and external monitoring of the school. The inspector also analysed questionnaires completed by 47 parents and carers and those completed by pupils and staff.

Information about the school

Storth is a smaller than average sized primary school. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is low. The proportion of pupils supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is high. Almost all pupils are from White British backgrounds. The school meets the current floor standards, which sets the government's minimum expectations of attainment and progress. It has gained the International Schools award. The school provides a daily breakfast club.

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	2
Achievement of pupils	2
Quality of teaching	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils	1
Leadership and management	2

Key Findings

- This is a good school. It is not outstanding because pupils’ punctuation and grammar skills are variable and although teaching is good, there are aspects to improve to make it excellent. A significant strength is pupils’ exemplary behaviour and the most effective promotion of pupils’ spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Leaders and the governing body provide a clear vision for school improvement and for the individual care of pupils. Parents and carers are overwhelmingly positively about the school.
- Pupils make good progress in their learning and their attainment is well-above average by the end of Year 6. Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs make similar, good progress in their learning. Pupils are avid readers because their interests are encouraged by a wide range of reading materials and they learn to link letters and sounds effectively from an early age. Writing skills are above average. Pupils write imaginatively, but their spelling, grammar and punctuation skills are less secure. Children are welcomed into the Reception Year and settle down quickly. They make good progress because their curiosity is stimulated and they are enthusiastic about learning and playing.
- Teaching is good. Pupils are challenged to achieve well and to acquire basic skills which prepare them well for their future. They very much enjoy learning. Some teaching is outstanding and this is reflected by pupils who are expected to think for themselves, take responsibility and work independently. This is not consistent in other lessons.
- Pupils are extremely polite and pleasant. They have very positive attitudes and are keen to learn. They feel very safe in this small, friendly and uplifting school atmosphere. The vast majority of parents and carers comment on pupils’ positive behaviour and they contribute to pupils’ excellent punctuality and high attendance.
- This school is well led by committed and exceptionally caring leaders. The effective leadership of teaching and management of the school’s performance has sustained well above average attainment in a warm and caring atmosphere.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise achievement and increase the proportion of teaching that is outstanding by:
 - fostering pupils' independent learning and their ability to think for themselves
 - focusing more on the teaching of spelling, punctuation and grammar.

Main Report

Achievement of pupils

Children start in the Reception Year with skills that are, overall, broadly in line with the expectations for their age. Effective teaching ensures good learning in lessons, especially in helping children to link letters and sounds and develop their emerging skills in reading. Learning is matched accurately to children's abilities and personal experiences. Consequently, children become engrossed while reading about 'super-heroes'. Opportunities to help children learn to write are evident in signs, labels and 'clues' amongst, for instance, the sand and water play areas and on the walls. Number skills are well-developed because of effective teaching and links to children's everyday experiences. They were keen to budget funds to calculate buying a toy, for example. The architecture of the building limits the range of activities outside and this reduces children's opportunities to become more independent. The school has imaginative plans to improve outdoor provision within the constraints of the building.

Pupils make good progress from their above average starting points in Year 1 to reach attainment that is well above average by the end of Year 6. Despite a dip in 2010, linked to the ability of the cohort, pupils' overall attainment has been well above average for the past few years. Attainment in reading and mathematics is higher than that in writing. Pupils' writing skills are improving because pupils are using them in many subjects. Pupils write imaginatively, factually and creatively but their spelling, punctuation and grammar are not as assured. Pupils are enthusiastic readers and their attainment in reading, by the end of Key Stage 1 and by the time pupils leave the school, is well above average.

Pupils learn well because they are known so well as individuals in this small school. Consequently, teaching in mixed-age classes is carefully matched to pupils' abilities and interests. Pupils in Years 5 and 6 thrived, for instance, in a mathematics lesson because each one of them was challenged to demonstrate their investigative and problem-solving skills in a competitive and highly enjoyable atmosphere. Pupils use information and communication technology (ICT) effectively to research, present and plan their work. They enjoy music and most pupils play a musical instrument. They are proud of their achievement in music and are enthusiastic about demonstrating their skills. Parents and carers believe that their children achieve well and inspection evidence confirms this.

Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs, make good progress in their learning. Tailored and speedy support for these pupils is provided through challenging and sensitive support in one-to-one tuition, small group work and in lessons. In particular, some of the children facing the most challenging circumstances, make outstanding progress in their learning and personal development. This is because, as many parents and carers commented, the care for their child is extended to support for the whole family.

Quality of teaching

Parents and carers believe that their children are taught well and inspection evidence confirms this. The good quality of teaching is reflected in high expectations, teachers' good subject knowledge and by a close match of work to individual pupils' abilities. In a lesson in the Key Stage 1 class, pupils developed their reading skills successfully because they were involved in a wide range of activities, ranging from reading aloud and self-correcting their pronunciation, to answering challenging comprehension questions. Where teaching is outstanding, staff ensure that pupils have high aspirations and considerable confidence in their abilities. As a result, pupils in Year 5 and Year 6 automatically discussed and reflected on problems set, used ICT to research strategies in mathematics, pondered quietly, and applied their learning successfully. Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage are well-taught. They enjoy their learning and play because they are stimulated by carefully prepared activities. Occasionally in lessons throughout the school, the pace of learning slows and insufficient opportunity is provided for pupils to be independent and investigative and their progress is reduced. Similarly, when pupils' understanding of the work set is not checked, some do not move on as quickly as others. Assessment of pupils' work is thorough and detailed. Marking is up-to-date and is mostly helpful in advancing pupils to the next stage in their learning.

Teaching for disabled pupils and those with special educational needs is good. Teaching assistants work effectively with teachers to plan lessons and the provision of individual support to ensure their needs are fully met and they make good progress.

Basic skills are included in the teaching of subjects across the curriculum, especially in history. Pupils revelled in their work on the Tudors and the Victorians. The emphasis on improving pupils' basic skills enhances their skills in mathematics, reading and ICT. It is not as successful in writing because pupils' skills in spelling, punctuation and grammar are not as strongly emphasised. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very well promoted in lessons especially when pupils are challenged to think, reflect and philosophise about the world around them.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Pupils are unfailingly courteous and pleasant. They are confident and mature young people because they are respected and valued by staff. In turn, they value themselves, their fellow pupils and adults. They understand their role in society, as seen by the actions of pupils on the school council and those on the enterprise committee, who purchased 'wet play' equipment after successfully raising the necessary funds. Children settle happily in the Early Years Foundation Stage, get on well with each other and enjoy playing and learning. All pupils have very positive attitudes to learning and are enthusiastic about their subjects. They say that they feel very safe and that behaviour is very good. This is echoed by parents and carers. Inspection evidence judged behaviour to be exemplary and that this is typical for the school. Pupils are very knowledgeable about what constitutes bullying and the various forms it can take because of the school's very effective behaviour systems. They were adamant and proud to say 'that bullying does not exist in their school, in any way'. Pupils are aware of who to turn to if they are troubled or want to talk with someone. They are involved in helping others through, for example, talking to pupils who sit on the 'buddy bench'. Social skills are very well developed. Consequently, pupils in the breakfast club, for instance, carefully brushed their teeth and washed their hands after breakfast. The spiritual

atmosphere in the school prompts pupils to pause and reflect, think of others and collect their thoughts. Excellent parish links lead to the successful promotion of pupils' spiritual development. Pupils enjoy school life immensely. Their high attendance and prompt arrival at school are testament to this. They also enjoy the many opportunities available and are not only proud of their academic achievements but also their musical accomplishments and sporting prowess. For such a small school they have won an impressive amount of sporting competitions.

Leadership and management

The popular and visionary headteacher has secured unanimity amongst staff for driving improvements. There is an unequivocal commitment to moving the school to outstanding. Although there is some relative small variation in the quality of teaching, the school's support and challenge for teaching staff reflects the determination to improve. Professional training to develop teachers' skills is regular and carefully matches priorities. Consequently, courses on improving pupils' skills in problem-solving in mathematics have resulted in effective curricular changes. Performance management arrangements are rigorous and challenging. The good achievement of pupils, good quality teaching and outstanding behaviour demonstrate the impact of leaders' actions and their good capacity to improve the school further.

Members of the strong and determined governing body act as a 'critical friend' and are keen to question the school's effectiveness. Senior leaders and the governing body promote equality of opportunity effectively, ensuring no inequality in progress and a very harmonious community. The governing body is very involved in school life and this extends to involving pupils in its meetings. As a result of its careful and effective actions to secure pupils' safety, safeguarding arrangements meet requirements.

The curriculum closely matches the needs of all pupils. The teaching of Spanish begins at an early age and extends to French in Key Stage 2. Pupils are keen to converse in a modern foreign language. The promotion of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development by leaders is outstanding and is part of the planned curriculum, with some excellent outcomes especially in pupils' social skills and impeccable behaviour. Partnerships with a school in Chile and schools in Blackburn, with pupils of different backgrounds, are starting to increase pupils' first-hand experiences of different faiths and backgrounds.

The school is at the heart of the local community whose residents are welcomed and involved in school life. All parents and carers would recommend this school.

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	54	42	2	2
Primary schools	14	49	32	6
Secondary schools	20	39	34	7
Special schools	33	45	20	3
Pupil referral units	9	55	28	8
All schools	16	47	31	6

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September to 31 December 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data 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.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

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

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Attendance	the regular attendance of pupils at school and in lessons, taking into account the school's efforts to encourage good attendance.
Behaviour	how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Floor standards	the national minimum expectation of attainment and progression measures
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the governors and 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:	inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school.
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.
Safety	how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.

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.



27 June 2012

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Storth CofE School, Milnthorpe, LA7 7JA

It was a pleasure to visit your school. Thank you for welcoming me so charmingly and positively. You have given me many happy memories of my time with you. Thank you also to the pupils who gave me such an exceptionally good tour of the school and to those of you who met and talked to me.

Yours is a good school. Your behaviour is excellent. You make good progress in your learning and reach standards that are well above the national average. Your standards in mathematics and your reading skills are very good. Your musical ability is also very accomplished. Teaching is good and your headteacher and I both want there to be more outstanding teaching. You write with feeling and expression, but I would like you to further improve your spelling, punctuation and grammar. I would also like you to all to be able to work on your own at times, search out answers to questions and for more of you to be confident in your ability to produce very good quality work.

You enjoy school life and your attendance is exceptional. You treat yourselves and others with respect. Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage make good progress and are welcomed into school by all of you.

I am confident that you will achieve well in your future education. The headteacher, governors, teachers and all the staff want the best for you. You deserve this because you are such kind and thoughtful young people.

Yours sincerely

Marie Cordey
Lead Inspector

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