

Holm Cultram Abbey CofE School

Abbey Town, Wigton, Cumbria, CA7 4RU

Inspection dates 17–18 April 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- The very special leadership and management skills of the executive headteachers have transformed the school over the past year.
- There have been huge improvements and all the signs are that the school is likely to keep improving at a rapid rate.
- Teaching has been radically improved and with it, pupils' learning. The leadership and management of teaching and learning have ensured that required improvements have been made and teaching is now good.
- Pupils' attainment is rising rapidly. After several years of decline in Key Stage 1, this year's results are on target to be the best for over five years. Achievement is good.
- Pupils behave well and are kept safe. They enjoy coming to school and they work hard.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is strong.
- Teaching is good. Individual needs are usually very well met. Lessons interest pupils and this encourages them to work hard. Computers are used well.
- The school is being returned to the heart of the community. After several years of discontent, parents are now saying that they would strongly recommend this school to other parents. The evidence of inspection fully supports the wisdom of this view.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- There is not enough outstanding teaching.
- The school has to demonstrate that higher standards are here to stay.
- The governing body does not have enough say in how it wants the performance of the executive headteachers to be checked.

Information about this inspection

- Eight lessons were observed. All teachers were seen at least once and most twice.
- Ongoing discussions were held with the executive headteachers.
- Discussions were held with representatives of the governing body, the local authority and a parent.
- The inspector talked informally with many pupils.
- Over one third of parents responded to the online questionnaire (Parent View). These responses were taken note of, as were those to a staff questionnaire.
- The inspector scrutinised samples of pupils' work and looked at documentation, including that relating to pupils' progress and their safeguarding.

Inspection team

Alastair Younger, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This is a very small primary school. Since the last inspection, the roll has fallen by about a third.
- Since the last inspection, the headteacher has left and has been replaced by two part-time executive headteachers. Both remain permanent headteachers of their own, outstanding, schools. This arrangement has recently been made permanent with the agreement of all three schools' governing bodies and the local authority. A Key Stage 1 teacher has been on extended leave for the past two terms.
- All pupils are White British. The proportion of pupils supported through the pupil premium (extra funding for those known to be eligible for free school meals, looked after by the local authority and the children of military personnel) is about average but it is rising rapidly.
- The proportion of pupils supported at school action is above average as is the proportion supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs. The number of pupils with speech, language and communication disorders has risen rapidly in recent years.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in English and mathematics.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching and learning to the point where much of it is outstanding by:
 - making sure that all teachers follow the school's marking policy in all subjects
 - making sure that all pupils, especially those who are higher attaining, are suitably challenged.
- Improve leadership, management and governance by making sure that performance targets for the executive headteachers include their performance in this school and that the governors of this school are fully involved in reviewing their progress.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Children often enter school in the Early Years Foundation Stage with below average attainment. Many of the current Reception class children arrived with the communication, language, social and personal skills more often seen in children two years younger. Attainment at the end of Key Stage 2 has been rising for the last three years. Last year, most pupils left at the end of Year 6 at a broadly average level of attainment. This year, the prospects are even better. Progress is good.
- Although good, progress should be even better. Until this year, pupils have not made enough progress in Key Stage 1. Standards have declined over each of the past four years. This decline has been halted. Evidence gained during the inspection shows that this year every pupil is likely to achieve national expectations and a few can be expected to exceed them. This will provide a much better springboard for future success than in the past.
- Key Stage 2 pupils make better progress in Years 5 and 6 than they do in Years 3 and 4 because teaching is better.
- There is nothing to suggest that any group of pupils achieves any differently to any other. Groups often consist of only one or two pupils. Pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium and those with special educational needs achieve equally with other pupils.
- Children in the Reception group and in Key Stage 1 benefit from the whole-hearted use of outdoor areas to stimulate learning. It was wonderful to watch Year 1 pupils running around with a trundle wheel, counting aloud with each click, despite driving rain, a howling gale and close to zero temperature. Even better was the fact that when the children came back inside they could describe what they had done and how it had helped them to understand the idea of length.
- Pupils are making good progress in literacy and numeracy. Their reading skills are improving well and younger pupils are showing confidence as they attempt to read more difficult words, making good use of what they know about the different sounds different combinations of letters make. No pupils were entered for the national phonics screening check last year.
- Most pupils know what their targets for improvement are but not enough know how close they are to achieving them or what they need to do to exceed them because teachers are not giving them enough information when they mark their work.

The quality of teaching is good

- Parents feel their children are well taught but about a half of them think teaching could still be better. The evidence from this inspection supports this view and it also reflects the strong ambition of leaders and managers.
- Most teaching is good; none recently has been inadequate. Increasing numbers of lessons contain elements of outstanding teaching. Where these are seen, they are nearly always based on effective planning which uses accurate assessment to establish what pupils could be expected to learn in a lesson.
- Occasionally, even in the best lessons, teachers do not move higher-attaining pupils on to harder work quickly enough even when it has become obvious that they can do the work in front of them a bit too easily. What happens is that teachers make a note and prepare harder work for the next lesson, rather than changing things immediately.
- The teaching of numeracy and literacy is usually good. Reading is well taught but teachers do not have a strong culture of encouraging pupils to develop a love of books. Pupils would much rather use computers to find things out than look through books and some teachers are happy to go along with this.
- Religious education is well taught and makes a very strong contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, as well as to their understanding of religion. All teachers

are good at getting pupils to work together, make friends and help each other. When groups are organised to solve problems they are nearly always of mixed ability and contain a mix of boys and girls.

- Teachers pay good attention to pupils with special educational needs and quickly arrange suitable support when it is needed. Those with more complex learning difficulties are fully included in lessons, whilst being given skilled extra support to complete tasks that may be unique to them. This prevents any element of stigma becoming attached to pupils with learning difficulties and helps them to achieve just as well as all other pupils.
- Teachers take great care to create stimulating, clean, bright classrooms for pupils. Displays demonstrate a good balance between information to help pupils to improve their work and examples of pupils' best work to promote encouragement and celebration.
- There are good 'booster sessions' for any pupils who are considered to be not achieving to their full potential. A strength of the school is that these booster sessions are not just confined to pupils who are approaching national tests. In this school, it is any pupil who is seen to need help who gets it.
- Leaders and managers have set about improving the quality of marking of pupils' work. There are signs of improvement but further improvement is needed. Most work is marked but the comments teachers add are often not helpful enough to promote improvement. Too often, pupils are being told what they have done and how well, but they are not being guided towards how they can improve their work.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Parents express very strong views that their children feel safe and are happy at school. They feel that most pupils are well behaved most of the time and that any sign of bullying is quickly stopped. Pupils, leaders, managers and staff agree and so does inspection. This is a happy and safe school where high moral and social values are strongly promoted.
- Attendance is about average and improving. Most absence is the result of clearly identified issues around a very small minority of pupils. Leaders and managers are sensitive to these but do not back away when they think improvements could be made. Absence is promptly and effectively followed up.
- There are very few instances of serious misbehaviour, but there is a little evidence of name calling, which has briefly upset some pupils until it has been well dealt with by staff to the satisfaction of all.
- Attitudes to learning are usually good. Pupils usually pay attention in class and work hard. When faced with insufficiently challenging work some higher-attaining pupils let their attention wander rather than asking for more or harder work.
- Most teachers are particularly adept at making their displeasure about the misbehaviour of individuals clear to them without drawing the attention of the class to them. This defuses awkward situations well and means that lessons are very rarely interrupted by bad behaviour.

The leadership and management are good

- The two executive headteachers have breathed new life into the school. Improvement over the past year has been rapid and is sustainable now that they have committed themselves to working in the school on a permanent, part-time basis.
- On the occasions neither of them can be present, the internal appointment of a proven good teacher as teacher-in-charge has been prudent and works well.
- With the good support of the local authority and the expertise that the executive headteachers bring with them, teaching and learning are rapidly improving. Without this positive input, the stretched school budget would have been hard pressed to bring so much needed change, so quickly.
- Teachers, including those newly qualified, are being mentored and supported well. They are observed regularly and helped to build on their strengths and eliminate any weaknesses. A completely new approach has been taken to setting challenging targets for teachers' improvement and monitoring their progress towards them and this is proving effective.
- At the moment, the performance of the executive headteachers is not included in this process. Their effectiveness is monitored by the governing bodies of their other schools, but not this school and their targets for improvement relate to their performance in those other schools rather than this one. This situation has arisen because their appointment until recently was temporary.
- Improvements are clearly evident in pupils' rising standards in numeracy and literacy in all year groups. The curriculum is being expanded well, to include more trips and much enjoyed out-of-school clubs, especially those that involve sport and physical activity.
- Care is taken to ensure that safeguarding procedures are carefully followed and that all pupils share equality of opportunity.
- The confidence of parents is being restored.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors are keen supporters of the school and are becoming increasingly well involved in checking up on how well it is performing. Over the past year they have been preoccupied with the leadership and management of the school, but now that these have been secured, they have wasted no time in getting on with supporting change and raising standards. Governors have a good presence in the school and make a very good link between the school and the community in which many of them live and work. They now understand that they are in a position to make demands upon the executive headteachers and are about to do so. At the moment, governors do not sufficiently monitor the effectiveness of the way funding through the pupil premium is used.

What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	112249
Local authority	Cumbria
Inspection number	401250

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	38
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Steven Pattinson
Headteacher	Sue Stainton and Claire Render (executive headteachers)
Date of previous school inspection	28 June 2010
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