

Kirkby Thore School

Kirkby Thore, Penrith, Cumbria, CA10 1UU

Inspection dates 18–19 June 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	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.

- From generally low starting points, most pupils make good progress as they move through the school.
- Many pupils join the school or leave other than at the normal times. In some classes, only a quarter of a year group has come through from Reception at this school. Nonetheless, the school is generally effective in ensuring that pupils thrive, no matter when they join.
- The school always identifies any disabilities and special educational needs that pupils may have as soon as possible and most of these pupils make effective headway.
- Teaching is never less than good and it is sometimes outstanding. Lessons are usually well planned and marking is generally of high quality.
- Pupils behave well. They feel safe and well supported. In some lessons, pupils' attention and effort are impressive.
- The school is well led and managed and on a journey of continuous improvement. The tracking of pupils' progress is accurate and the progress of different groups of pupils is carefully monitored.
- Governance is robust. Governors know the school well and are vigilant in their duties.
- Parents rate the school highly. Some were keen to say how well their children have settled at the school. Some feel that attention to individual difficulties is excellent.
- The local authority has recently increased its level of support for the school and provides very helpful advice. At the time of the inspection, the school was receiving timely and helpful support from the educational psychology service.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Pupils' progress in writing is not always as strong as it might be.
- Very occasionally, the school has found it difficult to cater as fully as it would wish for pupils with significant needs due to their circumstances.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed six lessons for a substantial time and made several brief visits to classrooms. Two lessons were jointly observed with the headteacher. The inspector listened to pupils reading and looked at pupils' books and teachers' assessments of their work.
- Meetings were held with two members of the governing body, with a local authority adviser and the school's educational psychologist. The inspector also held meetings with the headteacher, middle leaders and a group of pupils.
- The inspector observed the school's work and looked at a number of documents. These included data on pupils' achievements in national assessments, information on pupils' progress and the school's evaluation of its strengths and areas for development. Records on provision for pupils who need additional support, safeguarding procedures and behaviour and attendance records were also examined.
- There were insufficient responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) for analysis. However, the inspector spoke with several parents and considered a survey of parents' views that had been conducted by the school. Questionnaires were completed by staff.

Inspection team

Jim Bennetts, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This is a well below average-sized primary school. The number of pupils on roll often fluctuates by about 15% from year to year.
- Almost all pupils are of White British family heritage.
- The school is located in a rural village. There is a large industrial complex on the edge of the village which brings with it short-term employment. The village comprises a mixture of privately owned and social housing.
- A large proportion of pupils join the school or leave at other than the usual times. In some year groups, only a quarter of the pupils who have been on roll have remained at the school since Reception.
- The proportion of pupils eligible for the pupil premium funding is similar to the national proportion. (The pupil premium is additional funding for pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals, children from service families and children that are looked after.)
- The proportion of pupils whose learning needs are supported through school action is well above average and often more than double the national average. Some pupils are moved on rapidly to higher levels of support.
- The proportion of pupils supported at school action plus, or with a statement of special educational needs, is generally similar to the national average, sometimes rising to above average. Some pupils have severe and complex physical and learning needs. Occasionally, a pupil attends only for half-days because of this.
- In 2012, the school did not meet the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress. Some pupils did not take the national curriculum tests because of their disabilities or special educational needs.
- At present, the school has three classes: Reception and infants, lower juniors and upper juniors. Classes for juniors each have about 16 pupils. A full-time teaching assistant works with younger children.
- The school has a before-school care club. There is childcare provision in the adjoining Children's Centre, which is run under the auspices of Barnardo's and inspected separately. There are separate inspection reports.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise achievement further in writing by:
 - ensuring that pupils have established fluent joined handwriting not later than lower Key Stage 2
 - insisting that the presentation of pupils' work is always as good as possible
 - giving more opportunities for pupils to refine pieces of writing in the light of teachers' corrections and advice for improvement
 - always marking writing for its literacy features in subjects across the curriculum
 - providing more opportunities for creative writing in order to enhance the use of adventurous vocabulary and complex punctuation
 - identifying the difficulties that older pupils have with links between the way words are spoken and the way they are spelt, and putting in hand as much corrective support as may be necessary
 - ensuring that writing skills are always taught with maximum efficiency.

■ Improve leadership and management by:

- ensuring that firm action is always taken, including by engaging external support, to attend to the needs of any pupils whose progress appears to be stalling or whose special needs are becoming difficult to meet.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

is good

- As at the previous inspection, pupils generally join the Reception class with skills and capabilities which are lower than those typical for their age. However, there is a very wide range in most year groups. This year, all Year 6 pupils who do not have significant special educational needs are likely to reach nationally expected levels in reading, writing and mathematics, with some achieving a higher level. The great majority of pupils in Year 6 have made at least the expected progress since age seven.
- In 2012, several Year 6 pupils reached a high level in reading, writing and mathematics, with one attaining the highest possible level in mathematics. Overall, standards with the current Year 6 are a little higher than they were last year.
- Standards are generally higher in reading and mathematics than in writing throughout the school.
- Pupils of all ages settle well on arrival. In Reception, they quickly learn to pay attention and work productively with others. This good progress is promoted very effectively by the skilled teaching assistant. There is consistently strong development of number skills and literacy for most pupils through Years 1 and 2, though some leave Year 2 with handwriting that is not fluid or joined up.
- Most pupils make good progress in reading. By Year 4, less-able pupils have gained effective skills in figuring out how to say a word from the way it appears on a page. More-able pupils in that year group are fluent readers and can give a good account of a story that they have read. Occasionally, older pupils have weak spelling. In some cases, that is because they are not picking up with precision the sounds that make up a spoken word.
- Several Year 6 pupils have quicker and more accurate computational skills than are generally found at that age. Many in Year 4 draw graphs better than is usual. They make impressive headway from one day to the next.
- Since the previous full inspection, the school has been visited by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors, who checked progress in science. It was found to be good throughout the school. Pupils benefit from a wide range of science activities and the notes they make show perceptive understanding.
- As new pupils join classes, teachers quickly establish what they have learnt and enable them to learn effectively things they have missed. Data show that pupils who join towards the end of Key Stage 2 generally do as well as others.
- A high proportion of pupils have particular needs. These sometimes become apparent at a later stage. A pupil who arrived during Key Stage 2 said, 'Writing is really hard work and what I write is all scribble.' In fact, that pupil has progressed by two levels in writing since arrival. Despite limited availability of teaching assistant support, the school usually enables those on the special needs register, or who are vulnerable due to their circumstances, to make good and sometimes very good progress. Occasionally, it has been difficult to sustain the progress of individuals due to the complexity of their needs. At the present time, the school is able to call upon effective input from the educational psychology service.
- Data show that at age seven and 11, pupils entitled to the pupil premium (those entitled to free school meals) are generally doing as well as others. The school strives to ensure that all pupils have the best opportunities for success.

The quality of teaching

is good

- All lessons seen were at least good; occasionally, teaching was outstanding.
- Teachers have a good understanding of pupils' needs and have cultivated positive attitudes to learning. Assessment of pupils' attainment is detailed and accurate. Where appropriate, teachers plan different activities for pupils of different abilities. They are generally effective in circulating

as pupils work, ensuring that errors are attended to before they have gone too far. Pupils like their teachers and value the very detailed marking, which clearly identifies what has been done well and where there are mistakes or possibilities of improvement. Pupils of all ages work well together in pairs and groups. They mostly take pride in their work though, for a few, presentation varies from page to page.

- More-able pupils respond to identification of spelling slips by writing a correction. There are also some instances of a piece of writing being improved, sometimes making a fair copy using the computer. However, there is insufficient benefit from the painstaking marking because there is not enough opportunity to re-draft and refine pieces of writing. While books in subjects such as science or religious education are marked closely for subject matters, the opportunity is sometimes missed to give pupils advice on literacy features.
- Older pupils do a reasonable amount of writing. It is in a variety of styles, including letters, stories and reports. However, there is only an adequate amount of creative writing and, with that, only adequate opportunities for exciting use of words and phrasing, as well as more-challenging punctuation.
- Lessons usually have a good pace and teachers expect pupils to make vigorous effort. In the best lessons, there is palpable progress as pupils' skills and confidence improve. Occasionally, it takes a little too long to get a point across, or key points are not established conclusively or by the most efficient methods.
- With the younger pupils, the teaching assistant and teacher work together exceptionally well to cater for the wide age range and make best use of the excellent outdoor facilities. Elsewhere, some pupils on the special needs register receive good support. However, budget constraints limit teaching assistant availability. The pupil premium funding is used wisely to purchase additional resources, and to provide additional opportunities and some additional support.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Pupils like school and get on well together. They have a fair understanding of relationships and the forms that bullying can take. They feel safe at school and say that, while a few pupils sometimes 'fall out', relationships are pretty good. Most develop good social skills. They rarely intentionally say hurtful things, though there are very occasionally well-meaning but thoughtless remarks that might have been better not made. Behaviour logs and the records of sanctions show that poor behaviour is uncommon. Pupil questionnaires show that they feel confident that adults will look after them if there are any upsets.
- In lessons, pupils are attentive and conscientious. They try their best. In some lessons, there is an eagerness to learn and pupils are keen for success. They take initiative, spot slips in their work and self-correct it.
- Pupils enjoy the excellent facilities on the school field and play with due consideration for others. On a summer's day, older pupils have fun that includes the occasional playful rough and tumble on the grass. Many older pupils arrive on bicycles, with due regard for safety, including the wearing of helmets. In physical education, the youngest pupils respond with enthusiasm to vigorous exercise on the field. Pupils learn how to look after themselves and to be sensitive about the needs of others.
- Attendance is variable. It has improved recently and is currently above average.

The leadership and management are good

- The school is well led and managed. The headteacher is well supported by committed staff, who share the school's ambition to 'Aim High'. The school's self-evaluation is realistic. Assessment of pupils' attainment is thorough and accurate. The tracking of their progress is detailed and helpful. The progress of those entitled to the pupil premium funding, those recently arrived and all other groups is systematic and informative. This enlightens action to maximise pupils' progress.
- There are clear accounts of lesson observations and the monitoring of teachers' work and pay progression is clearly linked to performance.
- Parents greatly appreciate what the school does for their children. The school is keen to foster strong links with parents and some recent initiatives have been very successful.
- The school does everything possible to enable pupils of all abilities and backgrounds to experience success; there is no discrimination. Within the budget constraints, and despite frequent arrivals and departures and high numbers of pupils needing special help, the school does well for its pupils.
- The curriculum provides a wide range of opportunities. The recent residential trip to York was greatly enjoyed and is leading to extensive subsequent classroom activity; so, too, is the visit to another school in Carlisle. There is much enjoyed out-of-hours activity, for instance with music and art work. The school gives due attention to the spiritual and cultural dimensions of pupils' development. A session with a visiting nurse on bodily development as part of growing up was received with a mature approach by older pupils and greatly valued. The breakfast club provides a wholesome start to the day.
- While one or two pupils in the past have not made the progress aimed for, and external support has sometimes been variable, the school is determined to leave no stone unturned in ensuring that those who find it difficult to learn, or who are vulnerable because of their circumstances, get the best deal possible. The school benefits from high-quality support from the educational psychologist, who was seeing a number of pupils and parents at the time of the inspection. The school is well supported by the local authority; there is now a termly advisory visit and close support by telephone.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors know the school well. They are astute in juggling the tight budget of a small school and the high demands to be met due to the unusual pattern of arrivals and departures and special needs. They take appropriate responsibility for the pupil premium and other earmarked funding and their outcomes in pupils' progress. They are properly involved in the appraisal of staff and their pay progression. They ensure that safeguarding meets all requirements. Governors have access to training and their work is managed through appropriate committees. They give wise counsel and strong support to the headteacher.

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	112181
Local authority	Cumbria
Inspection number	412801

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	59
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Keith Robinson
Headteacher	Christine Wilson
Date of previous school inspection	17 March 2010
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