

St Oswald's CofE Primary School

Howgill Close, Burnside, Kendal, Cumbria, LA9 6QR

Inspection dates 25–26 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.

- Pupils generally achieve well in lessons and over time. Children usually join the Reception class with skills that are weaker than is typical. Most pupils leave the school with attainment in reading, writing and mathematics that is at least average.
- Pupils who find it difficult to learn make good progress from their starting points and in view of their particular disabilities and special educational needs.
- Teaching is good. Teachers are diligent in planning lessons, which usually go well. In the main, they know pupils' capabilities and provide opportunities which interest them and facilitate their progress.
- Behaviour and safety are good. Pupils are polite and conscientious. They have a mature outlook on relationships and feel safe in school.
- The school is well led and a very positive and caring ethos has been fostered. Staff strongly support the headteacher's leadership. Governors are vigorous in discharging most of their responsibilities. Parents support the school very strongly.
- The school provides wide-ranging active experiences for pupils, which are sometimes outstandingly effective in cultivating their personal development. There is some excellent art work. The best writing of older pupils is exceptional in its imaginative style and use of vocabulary. Pupils have a thorough grasp of science and some of their science notes are impressive. They have learnt a great deal from the creative use of the school's grounds and woodland, the many trips out, and from the school's 'adventure learning' approach.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Teaching does not always make best use of time because teachers talk for too long or more-able pupils spend too long on basic tasks. Pupils' standards are not always reliably assessed, so work is not always matched perfectly to their needs.
- The style of lessons in the Reception class is not always easy to manage with limited staffing and children who can be unsettled.
- Senior staff and governors are not always sufficiently analytical in evaluating the effectiveness of the school's work.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed seven lessons for a substantial time and made several brief visits to classrooms. Three 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 three members of the governing body and there was a telephone conversation with a local authority adviser. The inspector also held meetings with the headteacher, teaching and support staff, 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, together with minutes of meetings of the governing body. Records on provision for those pupils who need additional support, safeguarding procedures and behaviour and attendance records were also examined.
- There were 14 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) for analysis. Three parents set out their views in letters to the inspector and the inspector spoke with several parents. There were 14 responses to the staff questionnaire.

Inspection team

Jim Bennetts, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This is a below average-sized primary school.
- All pupils are of White British family heritage.
- The school is located in a village built around a large industrial complex. The village comprises a mixture of privately owned and social housing.
- The proportion of pupils eligible for pupil premium funding is a little lower than the national average. The pupil premium is additional funding for those pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals, children from service families and those children who are looked after by the local authority.
- The proportion of pupils whose learning needs are supported through school action is above average.
- The proportion of pupils supported at school action plus, or with a statement of special educational needs, is above average. Some pupils have severe learning needs.
- In 2012, the school met the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- At present, the school has four classes: Reception, infants, lower juniors and upper juniors. There are two teaching assistants, but there is only teaching assistant support in the Reception class for a few sessions each week.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching, in order to raise pupils' achievement further, by:
 - planning the use of time for maximum efficiency in lessons
 - refining teachers' assessment of pupils' attainment in order to provide tasks that best meet their needs, particularly for the more able
 - where appropriate, giving more attention to improvement of handwriting and spelling.
- Improve leadership and management by:
 - bringing sharper analysis to the evaluation of the effectiveness of the school's work in review of data, feedback to teachers on their work and the school's overall view of its own performance
 - reviewing the style of the Reception class curriculum in each session in relation to the number of adults available to manage it.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Children start in the Reception class with skills that are usually lower than are normally expected at that age. They make effective progress though, on occasion, a few continue to find concentration difficult.
- In the infant class, pupils make sound and often good progress from their starting points. Tasks are generally well designed to enable them to make good headway, though occasionally the most able older infants could be moved on a little faster.
- In the junior classes, pupils generally do well overall, with some acceleration in Years 5 and 6. In Year 4, pupils have better grasp of some aspects of science than is usually found at that age and are articulate in expressing views. However, the more able in this year group could occasionally get on faster with literacy. By the end of Year 6, those pupils who are not on the register of special educational needs reach standards that are at least in line with what is found nationally. Their books show clear improvement in the quality of work across a year.
- Pupils who are disabled or who have special educational needs generally make good progress, benefiting from expert individual support.
- Development of pupils' grasp of the sounds that combinations of letters make (phonics) is improving. Those at an early stage with this were seen to be doing well. By Year 4, pupils of all abilities have effective skills for figuring out how to say new words. The more able are fluent readers. However, fluency and understanding of a text are sometimes limited by a book being too hard or sometimes well within a pupil's existing capabilities.
- Handwriting and spelling are generally good for pupils' ages, and work is usually well presented. However, a few in junior pupils have underdeveloped handwriting. Some older pupils have problems with words that sound the same but are spelt differently, with recognising the need to double a consonant, and with picking up precisely every letter in, for instance, a word they write as 'figer'.
- Pupils often do better than expected for their age in subjects such as science and art. The school's topic approach to the curriculum has stimulated high quality work, for instance, with art and writing linked to the history of the local paper mill. Pupils have acquired an integrated approach to learning, which stands them in good stead for the next stage of education.
- The limited data from assessments at age 7 and 11 show that, overall, those entitled to benefit from pupil premium funding do as well as others in relation to their starting points. The school makes every effort to ensure that all pupils have good opportunities for success.

The quality of teaching is good

- Most lessons seen were good and, in some aspects of learning, teaching enables pupils to make outstanding progress.
- Teachers know their pupils well. Pupils are keen to please their teachers and work conscientiously. Books show that they take a pride in their work. Marking is encouraging and values pupils' efforts. Occasionally, not enough is done to correct spelling errors.
- Teachers' assessment of pupils' standards is generally accurate and identifies elements of the National Curriculum that individuals have yet to master. It is most reliable with the oldest pupils and recent local authority support has improved the reliability of assessment with the youngest children. There is insufficient double-checking to ensure that assessment and the tracking of pupils' progress is reliable for pupils in Years 3, 4 and 5.
- Teachers almost always plan classroom activities that are well informed by assessment and cater well for the needs of pupils of different ability. Extension activities are planned for more-able pupils. However, occasionally they spend a good deal of time doing the same work as middle ability pupils before getting on to harder things. The problem can be exacerbated by teachers not driving a fast enough pace with the more able pupils. Sometimes the work for the more able

is not as demanding as it could be.

- Teachers usually get points across quickly and efficiently, so that pupils are not waiting too long to get on with independent work. On rare occasions, the teacher gives too many examples of what is intended and therefore takes longer than needed in getting a lesson started. Teachers and teaching assistants are usually very effective in circulating during lessons to check on pupils' progress and to correct any errors that are occurring.
- In the Reception class, the teacher is often the only adult in the room. The teacher is sometimes occupied with the development of skills, such as writing, with a small group. It is then difficult to manage other children who are dispersed on a varied range of activities. Progress is better when a teaching assistant is present.
- There is analytical and well-focused support on an individual basis for pupils who find it hard to learn. This ensures that they make as much progress as others relative to their starting points and difficulties.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Pupils behave well. In lessons, they are attentive and appreciate the interesting activities that staff provide. They make good efforts, even when a little uncertain about how to proceed. Their books are generally neat and most pieces of work are completed conscientiously. Around the school, pupils are polite and considerate. They listened with rapt attention and empathy to tales in assemblies of the cultural heritage of far-northern lands. They delight in the opportunity to play in the extensive and well-utilised school grounds.
- Older pupils have a good understanding of the ups and downs of relationships. They said that 'kicking a football in another guy's face was a really mean thing', but, good naturedly, they threatened revenge! There are occasional exchanges of unkind words and there has been just one known instance of inappropriate electronic communication. However, pupils say that bullying is not a problem and they have every confidence in adults to sort things out. They feel safe at school and some enjoy opportunities for a little lively romping at break and lunch time.
- Pupils relish the trips and outdoor activities that the school provides. They are proud of their knowledge of trees and can describe the features of some with impressive detail: they know that a hawthorn tree can be inviting, but is not a good tree to climb.
- Attendance has improved and is now average. Low attendance by a small number of pupils has been addressed effectively. Unfortunately, despite the schools' remonstrations, a pupil is occasionally taken away on holiday, without legal sanction, at the time of national tests.

The leadership and management are good

- The school is well led. The headteacher has high aspirations for pupils' all-round personal and academic development. Over the years, much effort has gone into instilling a culture of consideration for others and eagerness for all avenues of learning. The headteacher is very strongly supported in this ambition by the whole staff, by the governing body and by parents.
- The headteacher and inspector were of one mind about the quality of lessons jointly observed. The headteacher and deputy headteacher observe lessons and monitor other aspects of teachers' work. Feedback notes give an account of strengths in lessons and a discussion of some areas for improvement. However, it is probable that identification of areas for improvement could be more robust. The appraisal of teachers' work is properly linked to their progress along the pay scale.
- The school's data on the progress that pupils are making in different year groups is helpful. It is very accurate with the oldest pupils. The method mostly used identifies specific points for improvement with individual pupils. In some year groups, teachers' assessment of pupils' progress is occasionally over generous.
- The school's own view of its effectiveness is reasonable in broad terms, but is weak in pin-pointing what could be done better. Neither governors nor senior staff reflect sufficiently on

positive and negative indicators in the national data analysis of from assessments of the school's pupils' standards at age 7 and 11.

- The curriculum is a strength of the school. While the school concentrates appropriately on development of reading, writing and mathematics, there is strong development in well-presented Physical Education lessons and in art and music. The topic-based curriculum is thoughtfully planned, integrating, for instance, aspects of science with history (magnetism, navigation and physic gardens in Tudor times). Pupils speak with enthusiasm of enterprise in pushing through transport with the Ribblehead viaduct, and knowledgeably about the social order in mediaeval times at Skipton castle. They had many memorable learning experiences at Arnside Youth Hostel. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural education is exceptionally well promoted. The school ensures that all are valued and have equal chances to prosper.
- The school has been supported effectively by the local authority. The authority is aware that a significant amount of continuing support is required.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors are unstinting in the time and effort that they devote to supporting the school's work. They wholeheartedly endorse the headteacher's endeavours to sustain a caring ethos and drive learning across the whole curriculum. The governing body ensures that safeguarding requirements are met and that necessary policies are in place. They are well trained and bring impressive resourcefulness to the management of finances. Governors are suitably involved in decisions on teachers' pay awards and check on the connection between the way in which the pupil premium funding is spent and pupils' outcomes. They rely more than is usual on the headteacher's checks on how things are going in the school. Minutes of the governing body meetings have less consideration than might be expected of questions that might be raised from data about pupils' progress.

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	112314
Local authority	Cumbria
Inspection number	412012

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	85
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Canon Nigel Davies
Headteacher	Mr James Douglas
Date of previous school inspection	24 June 2009
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