

Distington Community School

Church Road, Distington, Cumbria, CA14 5TE

Inspection dates 9–10 July 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.

- Distington is at the heart of the local community and highly valued by pupils, their families and the staff. The school focuses on pupils' personal development alongside their academic achievement.
- Whatever their starting point at Distington, pupils make good progress because their differing needs are well met. Teachers regularly check how well pupils are learning and use this information to carefully plan future lessons.
- By the time they leave school pupils achieve standards in English and mathematics which are in line with those found nationally.
- Teaching is mainly good and some is outstanding. Pupils particularly like topic work that captures their imaginations and is successfully used to further develop their reading, writing and mathematical skills.
- Staff work well together and provide good support to ensure that pupils know precisely how to improve their work. The school works effectively with a wide range of professionals beyond the school to guide and support pupils whose circumstances might put them at risk.
- During the inspection, pupils' behaviour in and around the school was good and school records show that this is typical. Pupils feel happy, safe and secure.
- The headteacher has a clear view of how successful the school can be and expects the best from pupils and staff. Leaders and managers ensure the continual improvement of the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement.
- The governing body provides a good balance of support and challenge. Together with senior leaders they are concentrating on raising the quality of teaching even further.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- In some lessons, pupils are too reliant on adult support, particularly when applying their mathematical skills to problem solving.
- Occasionally, not enough opportunities are provided for pupils to use their speaking and listening skills to develop their writing.
- Opportunities to build upon current links with parents and the local community have not yet been fully realised.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed six teachers and visited eight lessons. In addition, the inspector made a number of short visits to lessons and listened to pupils read.
- Discussions were held with school staff, groups of pupils, senior staff and leaders with responsibility for a specific subject, members of the governing body and a representative from the local authority.
- The inspectors observed the school's work and looked at a wide range of documentation including safeguarding documents, the school's procedures for gaining an accurate view of its own performance, its development plans, records of pupils' standards and progress, documents relating to attendance and behaviour, and pupils' work in their books.
- There were not enough responses to the Ofsted online questionnaire (Parent View) to generate a report. However, the inspector met with, and received letters from, parents and grandparents.

Inspection team

Naomi Taylor, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Distington is a smaller than average-sized primary school.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium is well above that found nationally. (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 that are looked after by the local authority.)
- The number of pupils from minority ethnic groups is well below the national average as is the proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion supported by school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is below average.
- The proportion of pupils supported at school action is well above average.
- The school holds Healthy School and Activemark awards and also the Football Association Charter Standard.
- There have been changes to staffing since the previous inspection and some classes have experienced being taught by several teachers.
- 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?

- Increase the proportion of outstanding teaching in order to accelerate progress in English and mathematics by:
 - developing pupils' confidence in applying their number skills in order to solve mathematical problems and work things out for themselves
 - increasing the opportunities to use speaking and listening in all subjects to develop pupils writing skills.
- Develop further the role of leaders and managers (including the governing body) to continually review and build upon opportunities to work with parents and the local community.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Children settle very well when they start in the Nursery and Reception classes. This is as a result of effective arrangements between school and home. Most children start school with skills that are well below those typically expected for their age. Children do well in the Early Years Foundation Stage and also in Years 1 and 2. They join Year 3 with skills which are still below those expected for their age but these skills are improving.
- By the end of Year 6, pupils reach standards which are now in line with national expectations in English and mathematics, but not enough do consistently better than this, especially in writing and mathematics.
- Changes have been made to the teaching of reading skills. These have been successful and have resulted in improvements in pupils' ability to learn how to link letters and sounds. By the end of Year 6, most pupils' reading abilities are at least in line with those expected for their age and for some, better. Writing is not as strong although pupils reach standards by the end of Key Stage 2 which are broadly in line with the national average.
- There is a whole-school systematic approach to teaching mathematics ensuring most pupils have secure mental mathematics skills to help with problem solving. Standards reached at the end of Key Stage 2 are broadly average.
- The proportion of pupils doing as well as they should in reading and mathematics is now in line with that found nationally. Not enough pupils do better than expected in writing but there is an improving picture. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage in their education.
- Most pupils, including those eligible for pupil-premium funding, disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs, now make the same good progress as their classmates because of timely and sharply focused help from teachers, teaching assistants and external agencies. The progress of pupils who speak English as an additional language is good, as is the progress of those from minority ethnic groups. The school is successful in narrowing the gaps between groups of pupils.
- The attainment of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals was lower in 2012 than other pupils but in 2013 the gap has narrowed in both English and mathematics. This demonstrates the school's commitment to equality of opportunity for all pupils.

The quality of teaching is good

- As a result of the headteacher prioritising improvements in teaching and learning through training opportunities for staff, teaching is mainly good throughout the school and some teaching is outstanding. This has led to improvements in the engagement and enjoyment of pupils in their learning resulting in improvements in achievement for all groups of pupils.
- In the best lessons, teachers and teaching assistants plan lessons really well together to ensure pupils are given work to get the best out of them. Consequently, pupils learn really quickly because they are given work which matches their ability and they are finding out things for themselves.
- In a Key Stage 2 English lesson, pupils were asked to imagine they were a famous person and in pairs they then had to work on a script for interviewing that person. The pupils were highly motivated by this and enthusiastically worked on the task which encouraged them to speak and listen which then helped them to write their script. Next some pupils acted out their interview to the class which was then encouraged to assess and think about how their work could be improved. Pupils made outstanding progress during the lesson and were extremely well supported by the teacher and teaching assistants. Occasionally, there are missed opportunities to use speaking and listening skills to develop their writing across other subjects.
- In another Key Stage 2 lesson, the teacher prepared a challenging mathematics lesson in which the pupils had to use their number skills to work out mathematical problems. A few of the pupils

lacked confidence and there was an over reliance on the teacher helping them to solve their problems so the progress made by a small minority was not swift enough.

- Improvements have been made in how teachers mark pupils' work. They regularly mark work but teachers now also include a challenge which pupils are given time to complete in the next lesson and this extends pupils' learning and checks their understanding. This is accelerating pupils' progress.
- Teachers and teaching assistants who support those with special educational needs and pupils known to be eligible for pupil premium funding are well trained to provide for the individual learning needs of each pupil. They always encourage pupils to do their best.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Pupils behave well towards each other and to adults and visitors to the school. One parent wrote that her children were 'very happy and settled in the school environment for which I thank the amazing staff and headteacher'. One grandparent wrote that her grandchildren were being given 'the best start in life' at Distington.
- Following a visit by Year 6 pupils to a local secondary school, the headteacher of that school wrote a letter praising the behaviour of Distington pupils saying they were 'a credit to their families, their school and themselves and have a high standard of social skills'.
- From a young age in the Early Years Foundation Stage, pupils develop an interest and enthusiasm for learning and this continues throughout the school. Pupils enjoy coming to school and this is reflected in improvements in attendance which is now close to average.
- Pupils say they feel safe in school and this is evident from what the parents told the inspector and from school surveys of parents' perceptions. Pupils are knowledgeable about different types of bullying but say that it is rare in this school and would be swiftly dealt with if it occurred. This is evident from school records.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted well. They are successfully taught good manners, how to measure risks, how to keep safe and why and how to choose good behaviour. The older pupils are proud to be role models to the younger pupils, acting as door monitors and ensuring pupils arrive to class promptly.
- Staff work well together and with external agencies to ensure that barriers to learning are being overcome.
- The school stages an annual musical production and a Year 6 pupil told the inspector that he would like to perform 'The Lion King' again, because 'it was awesome!'
- Behaviour is not yet outstanding because for a very small minority of pupils there is a dependency on adults around them to help them to choose appropriate behaviour.

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher has a very clear plan for the success of the school and has driven a number of positive changes since the previous inspection. The school has an accurate picture of its strengths and areas to be developed. More training opportunities have led to improvement in the quality of teaching and learning and pupils' performance. Some classes have recently experienced being taught by several teachers but the school does all it can to ensure that pupils are making good progress.
- The local authority provides light touch support for the school.
- The headteacher has considerably strengthened the way in which teachers are accountable for their performance and does not allow staff to be rewarded unless they are successful in helping pupils to make at least good progress. The quality of teaching and the progress of pupils are regularly and accurately checked so that steps can rapidly be taken to address any concerns.
- The curriculum provides a wide range of activities through which pupils can learn. Staff work hard to broaden pupils' horizons with trips and visits to places such as universities, a Hindu

mosque in Newcastle and the seaside.

- A very small minority of parents raised with the inspector that they feel communication between school and home could be better. There are regular newsletters and staff are available at the start and end of school. Leaders and managers, together with the governing body, recognise the need, however, for further review of the effectiveness of channels of communication to maximise opportunities for pupils and their families. The same parents also expressed concern about some classes being taught by several teachers but the school now ensures that pupils' progress is on track on a more regular basis.

■ **The governance of the school:**

- The members of the governing body are relatively new but are committed to continually driving improvements at this school. Governors ensure that the school fulfils its statutory responsibilities; all staff have been vetted and trained appropriately to keep pupils safe. They have an accurate overview of the overall provision. The governing body is now working more closely with the senior leadership team. Governors challenge staff on pupils' progress and are developing an understanding of performance data. They are aware of the quality of teaching which is linked to checking of teachers' performance and salary progression is based on meeting targets for improvement. They check that staff make effective use of pupil premium funding to ensure equality of opportunity and that all groups of pupils achieve well.

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	133264
Local authority	Cumbria
Inspection number	411763

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	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	111
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs J Bowman
Headteacher	Ms N Heron
Date of previous school inspection	16 November 2009
Telephone number	01946 830526
Fax number	01900 830526
Email address	admin@distington-comm.cumbria.sch.uk

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