

North Lakes School

Huntley Avenue, Penrith, Cumbria, CA11 8NU

Inspection dates

3–4 December 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.

- This is an improving school. The headteacher, well supported by governors and the local authority, has successfully tackled weaknesses and improved the school. Consequently, teaching is now good and pupils' progress is accelerating.
- All groups of pupils achieve well. Their overall progress has shown an upward trend over the last three years. Apart from a dip in results in writing in 2013, pupils reach broadly average standards at the end of Year 6.
- Teaching is good. Teachers expect pupils to do well. Lessons are briskly paced, teaching is knowledgeable and the marking of pupils' work is thorough and constructive.
- Pupils behave well. Most have good attitudes to learning, are keen to succeed and work hard in lessons. Pupils say they feel very safe in school.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is a strength of the school. High quality singing, sporting success, and exciting residential visits all contribute to pupils' genuine enjoyment of school and give them opportunities to develop their individual skills and talents.
- Leadership and management are good. Governors and leaders and managers at all levels know the school well and are clear about what is needed to make it even better. Consequently, the school is well placed to improve further.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Attainment in writing is not quite as good as it is in reading and mathematics. New initiatives to increase the pace of learning and productivity and simplify target setting in writing have not yet had their full impact.
- Even closer working with feeder schools is required in order to ensure pupils' progress in writing can be monitored accurately.
- Teaching is good rather than outstanding. Teachers do not always check learning in lessons regularly enough and pupils sometimes have insufficient opportunities to use their initiative and work independently.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 14 lessons and part-lessons. They made several shorter visits to classrooms accompanied by the headteacher. Inspectors also listened to pupils read.
- Discussions were held with parents, pupils, staff and governors.
- Inspectors observed the school's work and looked at pupils' books, progress data, safeguarding information and other documentation.
- Sixteen responses to the on-line questionnaire, 'Parent View', were considered as well as those from the school's own parental surveys and from school staff.
- During this inspection, inspectors asked additional questions designed to ascertain the school's view of the impact and effectiveness of local authority services to support school improvement. This information will contribute to work being carried out by Ofsted to assess the use, quality and impact of those services.

Inspection team

Ann Ashdown, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

John Ellwood

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This junior school is smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium, which provides additional funding for children in the care of the local authority, for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and those from service families, is average.
- A below average proportion of pupils are from minority ethnic backgrounds, while an above average proportion speaks English as an additional language.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs who are supported at school action is well above average, as is the proportion supported at school action plus and with a statement of special educational needs.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- The school has specially resourced provision for a maximum of eight pupils with physical/medical, or profound, severe or complex learning difficulties. Currently, there are no pupils using this provision.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching so that it is consistently good or better by and more is outstanding by:
 - checking pupils' understanding during lessons and adapting and adjusting work to make sure it is always challenging for all pupils
 - developing more opportunities for pupils to show their initiative, work independently and solve problems.
- Raise attainment and speed up pupils' progress, particularly in writing by:
 - consolidating and embedding recent initiatives to increase pupils' pace of learning and productivity and simplify target-setting in writing
 - working even more closely with feeder schools in assessing pupils' attainment in writing in order that their progress can be accurately monitored as they move through the school.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

is good

- The school's own baseline testing when pupils enter the school in Year 3 shows attainment is below average and particularly weak in writing. Work in pupils' books, that displayed on walls and the school's own very detailed tracking data all confirm the good progress pupils, including the most able, make from their starting points.
- Year 6 national test results were just above average in 2011 and 2012 in both mathematics and English. However, in 2013 a cohort of pupils with lower prior attainment achieved broadly average levels in reading and mathematics but results in writing were below average.
- The school has been quick to address weaknesses in pupils' writing. A raft of strategies to increase pupils' pace of learning and productivity in writing is in place and is already having an impact on the achievement of current pupils. Most pupils make good progress in their reading. They have good strategies for decoding unfamiliar words and enjoy reading for pleasure.
- Pupils achieve particularly well in mathematics. Years 5 and 6 pupils made good progress as they confidently calculated the mean, median, mode and range of some interesting statistics associated with their study of the Victorians.
- Pupil premium funding is used well to provide one-to-one and small group tuition for pupils. Consequently, pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals attain as well and make equally good and sometimes even better progress than their classmates.
- Disabled students and those with special educational needs and those pupils who speak English as an additional language achieve well because they receive timely and well-focused extra help from teachers and skilled, well-trained teaching assistants.

The quality of teaching

is good

- Teaching is good overall and in some lessons, it is outstanding. A very small minority of lessons require improvement. Teachers manage pupils' behaviour well and lessons are conducted in a calm, purposeful atmosphere of mutual trust.
- Teachers are knowledgeable and have high expectations of what their pupils can do. They plan lessons carefully, match work to the needs of their pupils and use a range of different tasks and resources, which engage pupils in learning.
- In a Year 5 and 6 philosophy lesson, excellent use was made of a recently released Christmas advertisement for a famous store to encourage pupils to identify sophisticated concepts such as reliability, hope, trust and friendliness. This work made a particularly good contribution to developing their social and moral awareness.
- Most lessons are briskly paced with timed activities which help all groups of pupils to be productive, maintain concentration and make good progress. A wealth of displays, particularly of good writing, on classroom walls provides a very rich and stimulating learning environment.
- Teachers mark pupils' work thoroughly and regularly and give them clear pointers for improvement. Targets are set and success criteria help pupils to identify how well they are doing. However, for some pupils particularly in writing, there are very large numbers of targets being set and the school recognises the need to simplify the target-setting process.
- In a small minority of lessons, teachers do not check pupils' understanding regularly enough in order to adjust and adapt their work to make sure they start the next challenging activity as soon as they are ready. Opportunities for pupils to work on their own initiative and solve problems are not yet fully developed in all lessons.

The behaviour and safety of pupils

are good

- Pupils typically behave well around the school, in the dining hall and in the playground. Most are

polite and kind to each other, to staff and to visitors. In lessons, pupils are keen to learn, answer questions readily and are proud of their work.

- Pupils enjoy coming to school. Attendance is above average. Records show that incidents of poor behaviour or bullying are dealt with swiftly and effectively. Pupils clearly understand the school's system of sanctions. Equally, they value the team points, golden time and other unusual rewards (such as the purchase of a class hamster) that are given for effort and good attendance and behaviour. Exclusions are rare.
- Pupils say how safe they feel in school and parents also feel that their children are looked after very well. Pupils understand about different types of bullying including cyber-bullying and have a good awareness of how to keep themselves safe.
- Pupils enjoy taking responsibility and members of the school council talked enthusiastically about their role in helping the school to improve. Many pupils like helping younger children settle into the school and enjoy their roles as 'buddies'.
- High quality personal support is given to pupils whose circumstances may make them potentially vulnerable. Expert help from outside agencies, combined with the very skilled and sensitive help available from within the school, helps to ensure that these pupils achieve well.

The leadership and management

are good

- The headteacher's determined leadership has been instrumental in bringing about school improvement. He is well supported by governors, middle leaders and all staff who understand clearly what the school needs to do to improve further.
- Staff performance is well managed and teaching is carefully monitored. Staff receive constructive support and advice on how to improve their teaching and high quality training to help them develop their skills. Staff feel valued and staff questionnaires indicate that morale is high.
- The school's checks on how well it is doing are accurate. Weaknesses, such as pupils' attainment in writing, have been rapidly identified and tackled quickly and effectively. Although initiatives to increase pupils' pace of learning and productivity have yet to be fully embedded in the school's work they are already having an impact and achievement in writing is accelerating.
- Pupils' progress is tracked very carefully. Detailed reports are sent regularly to parents so they are kept extremely well informed about their children's progress.
- Extra funding, such as the pupil premium, is spent wisely to ensure that all pupils have equal opportunities to succeed and those known to be eligible for free school meals achieve as well as their classmates. The Primary School Sport funding to support physical education is also well spent on specialist sports coaching, which both improves pupils' physical well-being and adds to their enjoyment of learning.
- The school works closely with its feeder infant school to ensure that all pupils are well supported as they move between schools and settle quickly in their new surroundings. However, the school recognises that further collaborative work is needed to ensure continuity in assessing pupils' attainment in writing in order that their progress can be accurately monitored as they move through the school.
- The local authority provides good support for the school. The school advisor visits regularly and has given valuable advice on evaluating the school's improvement, the performance management of staff and teaching and learning.
- The curriculum caters well for pupils' needs and makes a strong contribution to their good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. In addition to allowing pupils to make good progress in developing basic skills, it also offers a wealth of additional activities which pupils speak about with great enthusiasm. Staff and pupils are rightly proud of the very high standard of singing and sporting successes which the school enjoys. Pupils also relish opportunities to go on exciting visits to places as varied as Liverpool, a sculpture park and a local outdoor centre.
- Safeguarding requirements are fully met. Staff are well trained and knowledgeable about child-protection issues.

■ The governance of the school:

- Governors are very knowledgeable about the performance of the school and have a realistic view of its strengths and weaknesses. Individual governors monitor specific aspects of the school improvement plan and are kept well informed by the headteacher about all aspects of school life. Consequently, they are knowledgeable about performance data and pupils' progress, staff management and the quality of teaching. Finances are well managed and governors hold the school to account for how extra funding, such as the pupil premium, is spent.

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	112118
Local authority	Cumbria
Inspection number	426126

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	7–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	169
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Lynne Reside
Headteacher	Mike Pincombe
Date of previous school inspection	19 September 2011
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