

Kells Infant School

High Road, Kells, Whitehaven, Cumbria, CA28 9PQ

Inspection dates 8–9 July 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	Outstanding	1
Achievement of pupils		Outstanding	1
Quality of teaching		Outstanding	1
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Outstanding	1
Leadership and management		Outstanding	1

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an outstanding school.

- Pupils' achievement is outstanding. Pupils make exceptionally good progress from their starting points so that when they leave the school at the end of Year 2 standards are consistently above the national average in reading, writing and mathematics and strongest in writing.
- Pupils eligible for pupil premium achieve exceptionally well and reach standards that are better than the national average for all pupils in their writing and mathematics.
- Children make outstanding progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage. They are constantly learning in stimulating and supportive surroundings. The outdoor area is extensive and used exceptionally well to encourage learning. The space has limitations and this restricts providing even greater variety and richness of activities.
- Kells Infants is a warm, welcoming and highly caring school. The school goes that extra mile to make sure that those pupils whose circumstances make them more vulnerable get the support and care they need to help them to do their best.
- Pupils feel very safe and secure. They have an exceptionally good understanding of how to keep themselves safe. Pupils enjoy school and their behaviour is exemplary. They show a great deal of care for each other.
- Teaching is highly effective so that pupils thoroughly enjoy learning and make outstanding progress over time.
- Teaching assistants are highly skilled and provide very effective support especially for those with special educational needs.
- Learning activities are exceptionally well planned so that learning is always meaningful for pupils. Many visits and visitors give pupils exciting things to write about. Learning in mathematics takes place in real-life contexts.
- Teachers give constant attention to improving pupils' literacy and numeracy skills, whatever the activity.
- The headteacher, leaders and governors are determined to do their best for the pupils. They set high expectations of themselves and others. They have successfully improved teaching, pupils' achievement, behaviour and attendance since the previous inspection.
- Parents are highly appreciative of the school's work.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed parts of 16 lessons, including short visits to the teaching of phonics (letters and the sounds they make). Two observations were carried out jointly with the headteacher.
- The inspectors analysed pupils' work in their books during visits to classrooms. Further scrutiny of the learning journals of children in Reception and the workbooks of pupils in Years 1 and 2 was carried out jointly with senior leaders. Inspectors listened to children from Years 1 and 2 read.
- Discussions were held with staff, pupils, governors and a representative of the local authority.
- Documents looked at included the school's summary of its view of its own performance, improvement plans, information on pupils' progress, records of pupils' behaviour and attendance and documents relating to safeguarding.
- Parents' views were taken into account through the 17 responses to the Ofsted on-line questionnaire (Parent View) and the conversations held with parents as they brought their children to school. The inspectors took account of a survey of parents carried out by the school in March 2014. Questionnaires completed by 11 staff were also considered.

Inspection team

Gillian Salter-Smith Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Frank Cain

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is smaller than most primary schools.
- The proportion of pupils supported by the pupil premium is above average. (The pupil premium is additional funding for those pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals and those who are looked after by the local authority.)
- The vast majority of pupils are of White British heritage.
- A well-below average proportion of pupils are supported through school action.
- The proportion of pupils supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is well above average.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve even further the outdoor area in the Early Years Foundation Stage to provide an even broader range of activities.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

is outstanding

- From starting points that are often well below those typical for their age, particularly in their personal development, children make rapid progress in both the Nursery and in the Reception classes. When they leave the Reception classes the vast majority of children have reached at least a good level of development and their skills are typical for their age.
- In the Reception and Nursery classes, adults constantly encourage the children to talk about what they are doing so that they gain confidence and improve their language skills rapidly. Children improve their social development quickly as staff guide pupils to follow routines, behave well and be considerate of others.
- Pupils continue to make excellent progress in Years 1 and 2. By the end of Year 2, standards in national assessments in reading, writing and mathematics have been significantly above average in two of the last three years and close to but better than average in other years. Standards are strongest in writing. Inspection evidence shows that this good achievement is set to continue.
- Pupils are enthusiastic and keen to learn because of the many exciting activities they experience and the many purposeful activities provided for them. Pupils write highly detailed well-structured descriptions, for example when Year 2 pupils described nocturnal creatures such as owls following a visit by the 'Owl Lady'. Pupils make outstanding progress in applying their mathematical skills because teaching links activities to real-life situations, for example when Year 2 pupils planned and ran the school coffee morning successfully.
- Pupils enjoy reading and read regularly in school. Teachers ensure early reading and writing skills are a constant focus. Year 1 pupils have achieved above average standards in the national screening check in phonics in the past two years.
- The most able pupils make very good progress. A significant proportion of pupils reach above average standards by the end of Year 2 in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Those pupils eligible for pupil premium, including those known to be eligible for free school meals, achieve exceptionally well. In 2013, the standards they reached were higher than the overall national average for all pupils in writing and mathematics and close to them in reading. The gap in attainment between those pupils who are eligible and those who are not is closing quickly and for pupils currently in Year 2, those eligible have almost caught up on those who are not in all subjects. Pupils eligible for pupil premium make outstanding progress.
- Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs are very well supported and make exceptionally good progress. By the end of Year 2 these pupils reach standards that are better than the national average for similar pupils in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Pupils achieve well across a wide range of subjects. They particularly enjoy history and write at length and in detail about the experiences of coal miners following a visit to the local library to meet and talk to retired miners. Pupils sing exuberantly and tunefully and memorise a wide range of songs in preparation for a sing-song at the local home for elderly people.
- Pupils put plenty of effort and enthusiasm into the vastly increased range of after-school sports clubs and sporting activities. In an indoor golf lesson pupils concentrated hard on improving their mini-golf skills. The school sport funding has been used very well indeed to extend the range of sporting activities and involve more pupils in healthy sporting activities. Specialist coaches provide good quality experiences for pupils and staff learn from them.

The quality of teaching

is outstanding

- Outstanding teaching leads to pupils making rapid progress over time.
- Children in the Nursery and Reception classes enjoy a wide range of exciting activities both indoors and outdoors. Adults know the children very well and plan learning of early reading, writing and mathematical skills carefully so that all children enjoy themselves as they learn. The outdoor area is used well to encourage learning. Children were totally absorbed in designing and

making, delivering and selling pirate's underpants while outdoors. This activity was stimulated by a captivating storybook, '*Pirates Love Underpants*'. During this 'production process', children were very busy and the activities helped to improve their language, writing and their number skills; they used their imaginations to design lively patterned underpants and devise other activities related to the topic.

- Although the extensive outdoor area for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage is used exceptionally well to promote outstanding progress, the space has the potential to be improved even further and provide even more varied and richer experiences for children.
- Staff across the school have very high expectations of pupils' behaviour and learning. Relationships between staff and pupils are highly supportive so that pupils are happy and ready to learn.
- Staff keep a very close eye on every pupil's progress and make sure that any pupil that falls behind gets the help they need to catch up and do well. This is one of the ways in which the school promotes strong equality of opportunity.
- Staff make sure that the most able pupils are challenged and very well supported. In a Year 2 mathematics lesson, the most able pupils worked intently as a team to plan a trip to the seaside, calculating how long it would take to get there and how much the activities, the food and the travel would cost. As a result, they worked enthusiastically and improved their skills rapidly by applying them to a real-life problem.
- Teachers know the pupils extremely well and learning is not only enjoyable but also helps all pupils to achieve well. Pupils have ample opportunities to improve their speaking and listening skills by exchanging their ideas with each other. Questions encourage pupils to think things through for themselves.
- Pupils refer to their individual targets for reading, writing and mathematics when they are working and are very clear about how to improve their work. Teachers mark pupils' work regularly. They make sure that pupils know how well they have done and encourage them to complete an extra challenge so that they make even more progress.
- Pupils complete homework regularly. It supports their progress, gets them into good habits and prepares them for the next stage of their education. Attractive displays in classrooms value pupils' work and provide useful prompts and support for learning.
- Teaching assistants work effectively with a range of pupils. They support the learning of early reading skills very effectively. They provide well-considered support for disabled pupils and those with special educational needs. As a result, these pupils make exceptionally good progress.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding. Pupils are exceptionally eager to learn. They enjoy learning because of the varied and relevant activities in which they become totally absorbed. Pupils are really keen to help each other with their learning and enjoy solving problems together. This was seen in a lesson on measuring when Year 2 pupils discussed the best ways to measure the size of everyone's head and who was likely to have the smallest and biggest head. This was in the context of Victorian-age hairstyling.
- During playtimes, pupils play very happily together; older pupils enjoy being play leaders. Pupils enjoy the 'boat garden', a quiet, attractive area, which the pupils designed themselves with the support of governors and staff. The story chair is a particular favourite of the pupils.
- Pupils are very caring of each other. Pupils 'look out' for, and are supportive of those pupils who they know struggle in some circumstances.
- Rates of absence and punctuality have reduced significantly so that rates of attendance are now average. The school has worked effectively with parents to encourage good attendance and help them to realise the value of a good education.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is outstanding.

- Pupils feel very safe and secure in school. They say there is no bullying and that everyone gets on well together. They know who to turn to if they have a problem or are feeling unhappy.
- Pupils have an exceptional understanding of how to stay safe. Children in the Nursery class were very clear about what to do if they were not happy about a stranger or if they saw something that they thought was wrong on the internet.
- Parents are very happy that the school keeps their children safe, that behaviour is at least good and bullying is dealt with effectively.

The leadership and management are outstanding

- The outstanding leadership of the headteacher ensures that staff and governors work well together to ensure that all pupils thrive in a safe, secure and caring school where they have the chance to achieve their best.
- Leaders and governors ensure that checks on pupils' progress and teachers' performance are rigorous. As a result, leaders identify the right priorities for improvement and staff training, and teachers are held closely to account for the progress of pupils.
- Staff training is focused very closely on the correct priorities. The impact can be seen in many improvements as, for example the teaching of early reading skills, the sharing of exciting books, and the involvement of pupils in practical real-life mathematical problems. The changes have all served to accelerate pupils' achievement.
- Senior leaders keep a constant look out for the performance of all staff, including teaching assistants. They are accurate in their assessments of teaching over time and support, where needed, is prompt and effective.
- Middle leaders are very effective and contribute well to improvements. They check on learning in lessons and pupils' progress in workbooks and ensure that assessments are accurate. Actions are put in place to guide improvements.
- The planned curriculum is exceptionally effective in providing exciting real-life learning activities. The range of topics motivates pupils and the activities planned mean that pupils can see the purpose of their learning. As a result, pupils enjoy learning a great deal and make exceptionally good progress. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted extremely well. Pupils learn to be sensitive to the needs of others.
- The school works very well indeed with parents to encourage their support of their children's learning. Each morning, some parents spend time in school working alongside their children in classrooms. Specific training sessions are organised regularly to help parents understand how best to support learning.
- The local authority provides effective support for this successful school. This is because the headteacher has bought in additional trusted services from the local authority.
- The school's arrangements for safeguarding meet current statutory requirements.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors have a very secure understanding of the performance of pupils based on their past performance and the progress of pupils currently in the school. This is because the headteacher provides them with detailed up-to-date information that includes reference to different groups of pupils. They are not afraid to raise difficult questions about pupils' achievement.
 - Governors are fully aware of the quality and impact of the teaching. They receive regular reports from the headteacher on the quality of teaching. Some governors visit the school regularly to see the work of the school for themselves, including teaching. They know that good performance is rewarded appropriately.
 - Governors know how pupil premium funding is spent and what difference it is making to these pupils. They know how school sport funding is used and are aware of its extensive impact on pupils' participation and well-being.
 - Governors keep up to date with training and ensure that statutory policies are in place.

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	112169
Local authority	Cumbria
Inspection number	439561

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	3–7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	162
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Barry Prest
Headteacher	Catherine Taylor
Date of previous school inspection	9 June 2009
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