

High Hesket Church of England School

High Hesket, Carlisle, Cumbria, CA4 0HU

Inspection dates 16–17 September 2014

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an outstanding school.

- High Hesket inspires pupils to thrive in their personal development and academic achievement.
- Children get off to a flying start in the Early Years. The classrooms and outdoor areas provide a highly stimulating environment where pupils develop a love of learning.
- By the time they leave Year 6, most pupils reach standards that are well above the national average in reading, writing and mathematics. They are extremely well prepared for the next stage in their education.
- Throughout their time at school, pupils achieve well. The proportions making expected and better than expected progress are higher than those found nationally. However, sometimes pupils do not take as much notice as they could of their teachers' marking comments.
- Most disabled pupils and those with special educational needs usually make progress at rates similar to their peers.
- Outstanding teaching stimulates and supports pupils. Teachers and teaching assistants ensure that pupils are enthused and excited by wide-ranging activities.
- Pupils' behaviour is exemplary. From an early age, they enjoy coming to school and are very keen to learn. This is reflected in above average attendance.
- Pupils say they feel very safe in school and learn how to keep safe in other environments.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. They show a great deal of understanding and respect for those who have different beliefs to their own.
- The school is exceptionally well led by the headteacher and assistant headteacher. All staff share their vision for bringing out the full potential of all pupils.
- Links with parents are very strong. They are very appreciative of the highly personalised attention their children receive.
- All staff, including leaders, managers and the governing body, work extremely well as a team. Their successful actions have led to improvements in the quality of teaching and pupils' achievements.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed teaching in seven lessons, one of which was observed jointly with the headteacher. 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; the headteacher; governors; parents and a representative from the local authority.
- The inspector 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 66 parental responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) which the inspector took into account alongside a letter from a parent. Thirteen responses to the inspection questionnaire for staff were also taken into account.

Inspection team

Naomi Taylor, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- High Hesket is smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils and therefore supported by the pupil premium is much lower than that found nationally. (The pupil premium is additional government funding for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and children who are looked after by the local authority.)
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs supported through school action is lower than that found nationally.
- The proportion of pupils supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is lower than that found nationally.
- Almost all pupils are White British.
- Some pupils are taught in mixed-age classes.
- The headteacher is a Local Leader in Education.
- High Hesket is a Leadership Development School and used by the National College for Leadership of Schools and Children's Services to develop leaders for the future.
- Since the previous inspection there have been some key changes in staffing. A new assistant headteacher, an Early Years manager and a numeracy co-ordinator have been appointed within the last two years.
- High Hesket holds Fairtrade status and has Healthy Schools accreditation.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Continue to raise the standards that pupils reach and improve achievement further by ensuring pupils respond to teachers' marking and learn from their errors.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are outstanding

- The headteacher is relentless in striving to ensure pupils reach their full potential in both their personal development and academic achievement. This vision is shared by all staff.
- The senior leadership team and governing body are always seeking to continually improve all aspects of the school. There are very effective checks on the quality of teaching. Staff are not content with teaching which is less than good. This is a key factor in why the quality of teaching is now, overall, outstanding.
- Lesson observations and a new tracking system showing how quickly pupils are learning are used by senior staff to ensure appropriate staff training is in place. Staff who are new to the school are extremely well supported through training opportunities both within school and beyond. Staff are set challenging targets which are checked and linked directly to pay awards.
- The local authority provides light-touch support in recognition of the skills of the senior leadership team and their ability to improve their school.
- The curriculum provides a wide range of activities which are linked to pupils' interests. They particularly enjoy topic work, learning outdoors and the opportunity to learn French.
- The promotion of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is exceptional. During an assembly, older pupils shared their thoughts on the potential impact on themselves and the people of Britain in relation to the Scottish referendum. They demonstrated their understanding of the rights of individuals to have different points of view and yet remain friends.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors bring with them a wide range of skills. Those who spoke to the inspector had an extremely accurate view of the strengths of the school and areas for further improvement. They have a thorough understanding of data showing pupils' achievement and how this compares with other schools. This enables them to challenge senior leaders and check on the impact of new initiatives. For example, they are very clear about how the pupil premium funding is being used to accelerate progress for the very few disadvantaged pupils. Similarly, they have seen how the sports funding has increased the participation of pupils in a wider range of physical activities to promote their health and well-being. Governors have a very accurate overview of the quality of teaching and how it is directly linked to the salary structure of staff. They undertake statutory duties, making sure safeguarding arrangements meet requirements so that pupils and staff are extremely safe.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding. All the parents who spoke with the inspector shared this view as did all who responded to Parent View. School records also show that this is the case.
- From an early age, the school nurtures a hunger for learning new things. This leads to pupils developing a love of learning which continues throughout their time at school. Pupils are clearly happy at school and this is reflected in their above average attendance.
- Almost without exception, parents who completed 'Parent View' would recommend this school. All those who talked to the inspector are extremely happy with all aspects of school life. Many families do not live in the immediate area but choose to travel here because of the school's deservedly glowing reputation.
- When moving around school and during breaks and lunchtimes, pupils are extremely courteous towards each other, staff and visitors. Pupils take great pride in wearing their school uniform.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is outstanding.
- Pupils say they feel extremely safe in school and they have very positive relationships with each other and the adults around them. They understand different forms of bullying and, for example, the importance of e-safety both when at school and at home.
- Older pupils talked animatedly about residential trips to outdoor centres and to Edinburgh. These experiences teach them how to keep safe in different environments and broaden their horizons.
- Pupils make an excellent contribution to the village community. Those involved in the Fairtrade council play a significant role in raising awareness among all pupils of global issues and have even persuaded a local supermarket to stock only Fairtrade bananas.
- The primary school sport funding is used to broaden sporting opportunities for pupils, while developing the expertise of staff using specialist coaches. This has, for example, led to increased opportunities in activities such as training in multi-skills and golf tuition. As a result, more pupils are taking part in a wider

range of sporting activities to help them stay healthy and promote their well-being.

The quality of teaching

is outstanding

- The headteacher has been relentless in driving improvements in teaching, resulting in the quality of teaching now being outstanding overall and never less than good.
- Classrooms are extremely well organised and the content and timing of activities ensures high levels of motivation. Learning outdoors, trips and visitors to school make learning relevant and pupils can draw on these experiences in their work. For example, a visit by a sports reporter led to the launch of a termly school newspaper written by pupils.
- Whole-school projects are planned to allow pupils to use and apply their literacy and numeracy skills. Pupils recalled the project on penguins from last term and the range of activities that they embarked on which ignited their enthusiasm for learning.
- Older pupils enjoy the opportunities to use new technologies across many subjects to find out things for themselves and develop their ability to learn independently. Regular homework is set and pupils diligently strive to reach high standards.
- There is now a whole-school approach to teaching mathematics. In a Key Stage 1 numeracy lesson, pupils were introduced to using co-ordinates. They went outdoors where the teacher had hidden some treasure under a grid. They eagerly took turns to follow instructions which would lead to them finding the treasure. On returning to the classroom, they confidently worked in pairs on a range of related activities to quickly accelerate their skills with co-ordinates. Rapid progress was made by all pupils.
- In Key Stage 2, pupils watched a short, animated film which had only a piano accompaniment. They were clearly moved by the range of emotions that the film had evoked using only images and sound but no dialogue. In groups, they skilfully analysed what they had heard and seen before embarking on writing their own film review. Excellent progress was made by all groups of pupils in developing their writing and creative language skills.
- Highly effective teamwork by teachers and skilled teaching assistants ensures a high level of support for all groups of pupils.
- Regular and high quality marking helps pupils to understand how to improve their work. However, pupils do not always respond to teachers' marking in order to correct or improve their work and learn from their mistakes.

The achievement of pupils

is outstanding

- Following an excellent start in the Early Years, pupils are well prepared for learning in Key Stage 1.
- As a result, in the Year 1 reading screening check, almost all pupils usually achieve the expected level. This is because teachers and teaching assistants are extremely competent in the teaching of phonics (matching letters to the sounds that they make). Those pupils who struggle to read are given highly effective support and this leads, in the vast majority of cases, to rapid improvements. Pupils in Key Stage 2 enjoy reading a wide range of books which are meticulously recorded in their reading logs. As a result, the proportion of pupils reaching the higher levels in reading by the time they leave school is much higher than the national average.
- Since the previous inspection standards reached at the end of Key Stage 1 have risen year on year as a direct result of improvements to the quality of teaching. Those reaching the higher levels in reading, writing and mathematics are usually higher than the national averages.
- Year 6 results in 2014 show a significant improvement on the previous year with all pupils reaching at least the expected standards and a higher proportion than the national average reaching the higher levels in reading, writing and mathematics. Those making expected and better than expected progress is much higher than average.
- After disappointing results in 2013 for the spelling, punctuation and grammar test, almost all pupils in Year 6 in 2014 reached the expected level and most reached the higher level. This shows how well the school has addressed the quality of teaching in these areas.
- Most disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make similar progress to their peers because their different needs are quickly identified. There are highly effective links with external agencies to support pupils' learning.
- Pupil premium funding is used effectively. It is directed towards supporting the very few pupils who are eligible for free school meals so that gaps between their attainment and that of other pupils are closing.

rapidly. Year on year, the number of pupils in year groups is too small to make comments on their standards compared to other pupils in schools and nationally.

- The most able pupils are effectively challenged to aim high. For example, they enjoy their visits to local secondary schools to take part in 'Mathematics Challenge' days to extend their learning. Like their peers, they achieve well and some are tackling work at the highest primary school level. This demonstrates the commitment of the school in ensuring all pupils have equal opportunities to succeed.

The early years provision

is outstanding

- The exceptionally strong links between school and home ensure that children settle extremely well into the Early Years. The inspector saw first-hand how happily the Nursery children, and those who have joined Reception in the last couple of weeks, have adapted to school life.
- Most children start school with skills and knowledge that are typical for their age other than in the areas of number and letter recognition, language and emotional development which is often lower than would be expected. This is particularly the case for many of the children who join the Early Years in Reception rather than in the Nursery.
- There is a strong emphasis on activities to promote the core skills of language and mathematics which ensures children make good progress in the Reception class. As a result, they are now leaving the Early Years with skills in speaking and listening, number and reading that are at least expected for their age and, for many, much better.
- In the last two years the Early Years areas have been skilfully adapted. Children can now move more freely from classrooms to outdoor areas. Staff encourage them to explore and this was seen when a group of children were helping to dig up potatoes from their garden. The opportunity to count the potatoes reinforced their earlier work with numbers. On finding worms in the soil they were asked to find words to describe them, encouraging pupils to talk to each other and build on their vocabulary.
- Staff diligently take photographs of what the children are doing and record these in individual 'on-line' learning journals. These are easily accessible to parents who also record activities undertaken at home and in holidays and enhance communication between school and home.
- During the inspection, one parent told the teacher how proud his daughter was to have completed her homework. He was clearly delighted with how quickly she is recognising letters and the sounds they make and how she carefully practices writing different letters at home.
- The Early Years is extremely well led and managed with a strong team approach by staff who quickly get to know the children and build activities around their interests. As a result, all children are well prepared for learning in Key Stage 1 and this was the view shared by parents who spoke with the inspector.

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	112248
Local authority	Cumbria
Inspection number	448428

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	145
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Allastair Turnbull
Headteacher	Margaret Taylor
Date of previous school inspection	10 June 2010
Telephone number	01697 473386
Fax number	Not applicable
Email address	head@high-hesket.cumbria.sch.uk

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