



Nenthead Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 112116
Local Authority Cumbria
Inspection number 289178
Inspection date 6 March 2007
Reporting inspector Pat Kime HMI

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Alston
School category	Community		Cumbria
Age range of pupils	4-11		CA9 3LS
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01434 381400
Number on roll (school)	33	Fax number	01434 381400
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Iain Paterson
		Headteacher	Mr Michael Sheridan
Date of previous school inspection	1 February 2001		

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors.

Description of the school

This very small school serves a village community high on the moors in the north-east of Cumbria. The area suffers some social and economic disadvantage, which is reflected in the proportion of pupils in receipt of free school meals. This proportion has been above average for four years and is sometimes more than a third. The school currently includes pupils learning English as an additional language and Travellers. A much higher than average proportion of pupils start at the school partway through their primary education. The proportion of pupils who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities is above average and the number of pupils who have statements of special educational need is very high for the size of the school.

In January 2006, the school federated with a small school situated about four miles away at Alston. The two schools share a headteacher and governing body. There is a teacher in charge at Nenthead and other leadership roles are spread across the federation. Staffing has been unsettled since the previous inspection and the two class teachers have joined the school in the last two years.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Nenthead Primary School provides good quality care and education and the staff are constantly looking to improve what it offers. The school expects pupils to do as well as they can academically. This aim is achieved in a very caring family atmosphere, which is valued by pupils and their parents and carers. Consequently, pupils enjoy school life; they flourish as individuals, and make good progress in their personal development and in their school work. By Year 6, they are mature and thoughtful for their age. They know well how to keep themselves safe and healthy. They are sensitive to the needs and feelings of others and they contribute well to the life of the school and the wider community. Pupils leave Nenthead well-prepared to benefit from secondary education. The federation with Alston Primary School has broadened and strengthened the leadership team and enhanced the opportunities for pupils whilst in no way diluting the school's individual character.

Standards are rising and pupils make good progress, throughout the school. The school's results in the national tests in Year 6 have been broadly average for the last four years. Most of the present Year 6 pupils are on course to reach the standard expected for their age and several to exceed this. This represents good achievement in Key Stage 2. Much of the pupils' art work displayed around the school is of a good standard. Samples of work in science and geography were seen and all was of at least a satisfactory standard for the pupils' age, and some was good.

The teaching is good and some is of a very good quality. Staff have very good relationships with their pupils but still set their expectation high for each one, in relation to their ability. They are particularly skilled at questioning pupils in ways that push their understanding on by getting them to think deeply.

The school is led and managed well and it has moved forward in recent years, despite the considerable change it has faced, and it is well-placed to continue to improve. The senior team has a good grasp of the school's effectiveness and what might be improved, and it is ambitious for the school. Since federation, the planning for school improvement has covered a wide range of the two schools' work. It now needs to be refined to focus on the school's main priorities and identify how they will be achieved. Very effective subject leadership in English and mathematics, across the federation, has been a key factor in improving pupils' achievement. However, in general the leadership of other subjects is less well-developed.

What the school should do to improve further

- Sharpen the planning for further improvement, ensuring that it:
 - a) matches the school's particular needs within the federation
 - b) sets clear priorities and identifies the steps needed to achieve them.
- Develop the role of subject leaders.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Standards are broadly average and pupils make good progress. There are clear signs of rising standards, particularly in Key Stage 2. For example, a significant number of pupils' targets have been raised following an improvement in their rate of progress. For many pupils, the gains they are making in learning represent very good achievement. For the most part, pupils all do equally well in relation to their ability. There are occasional instances of underachievement, which are nearly always attributable to factors beyond the school. These have a disproportionate effect on the school's results, because of the small number of pupils in each year group. The school keeps an especially careful eye on the progress of pupils from Traveller families and those who join the school partway through the primary years so that, in their time at Nenthead, they make good progress. The school supports pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities well, ensuring that they achieve as well as they can, though often this is in very small steps. Additional support is also provided to give a boost to pupils, for example those in Year 2 whose writing is average or a little below that.

Children's attainment, when they start school varies considerably. For many it is below what is typical for their age. Most who start in Reception have not attended any pre-school provision outside of the home. Children make good progress in the Reception year, gaining in confidence and independence as well as learning about the world around them and developing early literacy and numeracy skills. Progress continues to be good in Key Stages 1 and 2 and it is particularly rapid for many pupils in Years 5 and 6.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' personal development is good. They make good progress in this aspect of their learning, flourishing within the school's caring, family atmosphere. The personal attributes they develop, along with their good academic achievement, prepare them well for the future. Pupils enjoy school and speak enthusiastically about the good range of opportunities they have; for instance, for sport, clubs and educational visits. Pupils all have good opportunities to contribute to the work of the school council and they know their voices will always be heard.

Pupils are very well-behaved and show a very good degree of tolerance, respect and sensitivity to others. Pupils have a good understanding of healthy lifestyles and the importance of exercise and a healthy diet. They greatly enjoyed their recent 'Healthy Heart' project and learned a lot from it.

Attendance has improved recently and is broadly average. The school is proactive in promoting the importance of school attendance whilst respecting the traditions of travelling families.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are good throughout the school and particularly effective in Key Stage 2. Teachers are self-critical, always looking to improve. They know their pupils very well and match work well to their different needs in mixed age classes, providing the right degree of challenge for each pupil. This means that all pupils can experience success but have to make an effort to do so. In each lesson, right from Reception, pupils know and understand what they are to learn and how they will know if they have been successful. They also have a good understanding of their individual targets.

In lessons and displays in classrooms, the vibrancy, creativity and intellectual rigour of the teaching are evident. Teachers show imagination in the interesting activities they plan, which motivate pupils to try hard and work together to achieve results. For example, in a lesson about measurement and weight in Key Stage 2, pupils were required to integrate all the skills they had already learned. The older and more able pupils were challenged to find information on the internet about postal charges and use it to calculate the cost of sending several packages containing items a university student had left behind at home. They rose admirably to this challenge, working with determination and commitment and a very good degree of collaborative effort.

Teaching assistants are deployed well throughout school and they make a very positive contribution, particularly to the learning of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those in the early years. Teachers include all pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities in class lessons. They manage this skilfully, providing work that is tailored well to these pupils' individual needs but still closely linked to the work of the class. The marking of pupils' work is encouraging and helpful, not least because it indicates what could be better. However, targets are not always as specific as they might be and sometimes the same shortcoming is noted repeatedly but not overcome.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The school's good curriculum meets the needs of pupils of all abilities in mixed-age classes. It is well-planned to assure progression in learning and be sufficiently broad and balanced. The provision for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, including those with statements of special educational need, is good. These pupils follow the same curriculum as their classmates but, within it, work is tailored to their particular needs. The curriculum for children in Reception covers all the required areas of learning, often imaginatively. It is particularly good in personal, social and emotional development. Pupils enjoy a good range of extra activities, many of which are provided in school hours so that all can join in. Visits, visitors and special projects enrich the curriculum well, broadening pupils' horizons and extending their knowledge of the

local area. There is a good and effective emphasis on developing pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness, particularly the awareness of cultural diversity.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The school caters for pupils with a very wide range of abilities and from diverse backgrounds. It promotes social and educational inclusion very successfully, so pupils work and play together and each one is valued as a full member of the school family. Parents and carers value this welcoming, inclusive ethos which reflects the good quality of care, guidance and support. Pastoral care is very good and all requirements for safeguarding pupils are met. The school works in good partnership with other agencies to support and protect vulnerable pupils. New pupils are welcomed and helped to settle in. Specialist advice is sought to help staff meet the language needs of pupils for whom English is an additional language. Academic support and guidance are good. This is evident from the generally good marking of pupils' work, pupils' good knowledge and understanding of their targets, and the careful tailoring of additional support to meet individual needs.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The school shares a leadership team and governing body with its partner school in the federation. These senior staff work well together, having a shared educational vision, commitment to high achievement, and ambition for the school. Their achievements show their good capacity to improve the school further. Effective policies and procedures are produced for use in both schools and this works well. For example, the recently developed system for tracking pupils' progress term-by-term has helped senior staff see more easily how every pupil is doing and to notice any slip in rates of progress. Subject leadership is good where it is vested in senior staff but less well-developed in other subjects. Governance is good and governors have made a significant contribution to the school's development. They provide knowledgeable support and an appropriate degree of challenge. The two schools have shared a plan for development since they federated. The time is now ripe to review this plan, determining the main priorities and the school's particular needs. The school makes good use of its resources and provides a good education. However, its funding per pupil is considerably higher than average. This provides satisfactory value for money.

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Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	2
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The behaviour of learners	2
The attendance of learners	3
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average to below average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	3
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Nenthead Primary School

Nenthead

Alston

Cumbria

CA9 3LS

7 March 2007

Dear Children,

I would like to thank all the children for welcoming me and helping me when I visited your school recently. I came to find out how well all the children are learning. I found out a lot from watching your lessons, looking at your work, and talking to the staff. It was especially helpful to talk to a group of children about what it's like to be a pupil at your school. This letter is to tell you what I found out about your school.

You get a good education at Nenthead Primary School and you are all making good progress in your learning. I was struck by your school's warm, friendly, family atmosphere and the way every one of you is helped to develop as an individual young person. You all get on very well together and with the staff. I was impressed by how mature and thoughtful you are for your age. You behave very well. You work well independently and in groups, because the staff encourage this all the way through school. You are tolerant and respect and value other people.

The staff want the best for you. They take good care of you and teach you well. They expect a lot from you. They make lessons interesting and give every one work that they can do, so long as they try hard. Now that your school and Alston Primary School work closely together you have more opportunities; for instance, the activities on Wednesday afternoons, and you seem to appreciate this. The school is going to think about how to make the best use of the staff in both schools to ensure you do as well as you can in every subject.

Your school was last inspected six years ago and it has improved since then. There have been a lot of changes with new teachers coming and the federation with Alston Primary School. The staff and governors are always thinking about how to make your school even better still and I am confident that they will make sure it continues to improve. They are going to decide what are the most important things to do next and then plan exactly how to do them. Mr Sheridan has already made a start on this.

For you, the important thing is to keep working and playing hard, safe and fair. I know you have already made useful suggestions about how to improve your school. I am sure that you will have good ideas to contribute to the plans to make it an even better school.

You have my very best wishes for the future.

Yours sincerely

Pat Kime

Her Majesty's Inspector of Schools