



Derwent Vale Primary School & Nursery

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 112239
Local Authority Cumbria
Inspection number 289213
Inspection dates 6–7 November 2006
Reporting inspector John Atkinson

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Great Clifton
School category	Community		Workington, Cumbria
Age range of pupils	3–11		CA14 1WA
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01900 325235
Number on roll (school)	64	Fax number	01900 325236
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Mr Joe Holliday
		Headteacher	Mrs Emma Jackson
Date of previous school inspection	1 June 2001		

Age group 3–11	Inspection dates 6–7 November 2006	Inspection number 289213
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

Derwent Vale Primary School is a small school on the outskirts of Workington. It serves the villages of Great and Little Clifton. The majority of pupils are White British with a small number of Traveller children. When they start school, children's attainment is below expectations and there is a higher than average number of pupils identified as having learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals is above average. The school has the Healthy Schools award and has recently opened a children's centre as part of its extended provision.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a good school with outstanding leadership from the headteacher. She is an excellent motivator, skilled in analysing the performance of all aspects of the school, driving it forward with authority and conviction. As a result, significant improvements in the ethos of the school and the standards of attainment have been achieved in the past two years. The school gives good value for money.

The ethos impacts positively on pupils' personal development and well-being. The relationships between pupils and staff are excellent and built upon mutual trust and respect. Pupils enjoy coming to school. They feel safe, secure and relaxed because they experience no harassment and any problems are addressed quickly and fairly. Behaviour is good. Pupils are tolerant, sensitive and keen to ensure that everyone is happy and feels included. This leads to pupils being enthusiastic about taking good care of younger children and participating in the running of the school. Pupils are very well cared for and their individual needs are well known and catered for. They receive very good advice and support about how to handle their emotions and this leads to pupils acting responsibly and showing consideration for the needs of others. The school provides a healthy environment that results in pupils being knowledgeable about the important elements of a healthy lifestyle. This is borne out by their active participation in a wide range of sporting activities, eating healthily and regularly drinking water.

The school is effective in motivating pupils, and staff have high expectations of what they should achieve. Challenging targets are set and good support and guidance are available to help pupils, particularly those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The outcome is that pupils' achievements are good and the progress of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is outstanding. When children start school, their communication skills are well below what is expected and they have a limited knowledge and understanding of the world. They have a good start to their education and make good progress in the Foundation Stage because of the high quality of the provision and the intensity of the support they receive. Standards at the end of Year 2 and Year 6 rose sharply in the past three years. Good progress in Years 1 and 2 has led to above average standards in reading, writing and mathematics in 2006. This good progress is sustained in junior classes and resulted in above average standards in science and mathematics and average standards in English in 2006. Weaknesses in the quality of pupils' spelling and sentence construction restrict the rate of progress in English.

Pupils achieve well because the quality of teaching is good and learning is consolidated through the effective links between different subjects. Teachers expect pupils to work hard and give good feedback as to how they can improve and achieve their next target. Varied teaching strategies and a stimulating curriculum captivate pupils' interest and attention and result in good levels of concentrated learning.

The headteacher is very focused on raising standards and inspiring pupils to do their very best by acting as mature, ambitious, responsible young people. She provides great support to all staff and leads by example, resulting in a staff team with high morale, high expectations and oozing in confidence. The effect is that staff are innovative in

the pursuit of excellence. The governing body are supportive of the school and work closely with the headteacher to ensure that finances are well managed and resources are good. They have yet to develop their role in monitoring and evaluating other aspects of the school's performance.

What the school should do to improve further

- Increase the accuracy of spelling and construction of sentences so that a higher percentage of pupils reach the expected standards in English.
- Ensure that the governing body is fully involved in monitoring and evaluating the school's performance.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Over the past three years, standards have improved dramatically as a result of good teaching and outstanding leadership. Standards in 2006 were the highest the school has ever achieved. Children start school with levels of attainment below expectations. They make rapid progress in the Foundation Stage and their physical, personal and social development improves significantly.

In Years 1 and 2, pupils make good progress and, in 2006, standards were above average in reading, writing and mathematics. In Years 3 to 6, progress is consistently good. As a result, standards are above average in science and mathematics with over 50% of pupils attaining the higher Level 5 in 2006. Standards in English are average because there are weaknesses in the standard of writing.

A significant strength is the outstanding progress of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities; for example, in 2006 a number of pupils progressed from a Level 1 when they were 7-years-old to a Level 5 when they were 11-years-old. Across the curriculum, and particularly in the arts, pupils make enormous strides; for example, standards in music are very good and singing is of a very high quality. The overall impact of the good progress in other subjects is that pupils are developing a wide range of skills that will significantly assist them personally and in their future economic well-being.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils make good progress in their personal, spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and this is one of the school's strengths. Although a small school, considerable effort is made to give pupils an abundance of opportunities and experiences to promote their development as responsible citizens. Routines are very well established and clear boundaries are defined so that pupils know what is expected of them. The effect is that pupils feel secure and safe and are able to adapt to new situations and friendship groups with confidence. Attendance is satisfactory and most pupils attend well and are punctual. The structured reward system celebrates pupils'

successes and is very effective in building and boosting their self-esteem. Pupils are very active in community activities, increasing their awareness of the needs of others and how they can make a positive contribution to helping them. The school council is an active forum that pupils aspire to be elected to and pupils carry out the many responsibility roles given to them with pride, enthusiasm and maturity.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching has many strengths and, in consequence, pupils learn well. There is a strong sense of everyone working together in lessons. Pupils value the fact that their teachers want them to do their very best and high expectations have led to significant improvements in standards. Lessons are lively and interesting with lots of extremely well planned and motivating things to do. Therefore, the pupils work hard and concentrate well. By consistently sharing lesson objectives at the start of lessons, the rate of learning improves because pupils are clear about what they are doing and why. The teachers' skilful questioning encourages good levels of thinking and draws out thoughtful answers with pupils having to justify their ideas. The teaching of writing skills develops pupils' imaginative use of language but does not pay sufficient attention to the accuracy of spelling or sentence construction. Teachers use the excellent assessment and tracking systems to plan carefully so that different ability groups are working at the right level. Teachers and teaching assistants work collaboratively to establish a positive classroom atmosphere and focus on ensuring that all pupils are stretched to their full potential. This has had a particularly positive impact on pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum and its enrichment are good. The school faces a constant battle to maintain balance and breadth in the curriculum when all of the classes are of mixed ages. There are many opportunities beyond the standard curriculum for pupils to participate in; for example, sports, music and drama clubs. These are influential in motivating pupils and widening their horizons, with the effect that pupils develop a desire to experiment in new activities. Regular visits and visitors are used very well to bring the curriculum to life and pupils talk enthusiastically about how these experiences make learning more enjoyable and fun. Many of the enrichment activities develop important skills such as team building, problem solving and decision making that boost pupils' confidence in taking initiatives and being creative in their thinking.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

This is a very safe and caring school and parents are very pleased with how well their children are looked after, both academically and personally. Arrangements to safeguard pupils are very thorough and this means that the most vulnerable or at risk pupils are quickly identified and supported. Child protection arrangements and those to ensure everyone's health, welfare and safety are in place. Pupils are made very aware of what their targets are, how they can achieve them and what support is available if anyone is facing difficulties. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are given exceptional guidance and support with their learning targets and this is key to the outstanding progress that they make.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher provides outstanding leadership and is very effective in focusing the whole school on raising standards and achieving the very best personal development for each individual. She has developed and harnessed a committed staff team who have a good grasp of tracking pupils' progress and target setting. This is very influential in ensuring good achievement and the effective inclusion of all pupils, regardless of their learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The high quality of leadership means that staff feel a full part of a team that is striving for excellence and excited by new challenges. The school has made good improvement since its last inspection. Governance is satisfactory. The governors are very supportive of the school and work closely with the headteacher on matters of finance and health and safety. The governing body plays a limited role in the monitoring of the school's performance and has yet to develop the skills needed to verify the headteacher's self-evaluation of the school.

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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	2
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	1

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?	1

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	2
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3
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

Derwent Vale Primary School & Nursery

Great Clifton

Workington

Cumbria

CA14 1WA

6 November 2006

Dear Pupils

Thank you very much for making me welcome on my visit to your school. I was very impressed by your behaviour and attitude towards your work. I really enjoyed seeing how well you play together and help each other. I am sure that these are some of the reasons that you get so much out of school. You told me that you enjoyed school and I can see why. The staff take such very good care of you and help you to do your best. I think you should be proud of your own achievements and that you go to such a good school in which:

- all the staff work as a team to make learning fun and enjoyable
- the pupils all want to be involved in everything that the school offers
- you get really good help when you have difficulties with your learning.

I think that you can help yourselves and the school by continuing with your very positive attitudes. It is really important that you make the most out of the opportunities school provides for you because then you will be able to achieve your ambitions – and I know from my discussions that you have very high ambitions. On the other hand, you need to work even harder to improve the quality of your writing, particularly by taking more care with your handwriting and being more accurate with your spellings. Governors should also play a larger role in looking at the quality of your work.

I hope that you continue to take advantage of everything that the school offers and put 100% effort into everything you do.

Best Wishes

John Atkinson

Lead inspector