



# Plumbland CofE School

## Inspection Report

**Unique Reference Number** 112275  
**Local Authority** Cumbria  
**Inspection number** 289231  
**Inspection date** 13 February 2007  
**Reporting inspector** Keith Oglesby

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Primary	<b>School address</b>	Parsonby
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary controlled		Aspatria, Wigton
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–11		Cumbria, CA7 2DQ
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed	<b>Telephone number</b>	01697 320628
<b>Number on roll (school)</b>	42	<b>Fax number</b>	01697 323532
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body	<b>Chair</b>	Mr John Taylor
		<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr Alan Coates
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	1 March 2002		

<b>Age group</b>	<b>Inspection date</b>	<b>Inspection number</b>
4–11	13 February 2007	289231

---

© Crown copyright 2007

Website: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

## Description of the school

This is a small rural primary school in Cumbria. It serves a village community, though about half the pupils travel from other areas. There are 42 pupils and numbers have increased since the last inspection. All pupils are of White British heritage. Their social circumstances are broadly average. The proportion of pupils entitled to free meals is lower than average. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is also below average, although numbers have increased recently. The school holds the Activemark Gold award and was chosen as Cumbrian Village School of the Year in 2004 by a local newspaper.

## 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 at the heart of its small community. Parents are overwhelmingly supportive. One wrote, 'The school made my child feel so welcome and part of the community that his confidence and learning have really progressed. He is a very happy child.'

Pupils' personal development is outstanding. They love coming to school and make the most of all that it offers. They work hard, treat others with respect and want to learn. They rarely miss school and their behaviour is exemplary. Pupils leave Plumbland as self-assured, responsible and mature young people.

The school makes sure that pupils understand how to stay healthy and safe. It provides an exceptional range of opportunities for exercise and sport. These are enjoyed by both boys and girls from Reception to Year 6.

Pupils of all abilities achieve well. Although the ability of different year groups varies, standards attained by the pupils are generally above average in English, mathematics and science. From starting points that are a little below those typical for children of their age, pupils of all abilities make good progress. The pupils' good achievement is reflected in the school's test results. Standards in information and communication technology (ICT) are below average, though rising. This is because equipment has very recently been improved and updated. In some areas, for example control technology, pupils have not had enough experience to move beyond a basic level. They do not have enough regular opportunities to use technology in other subjects.

Teaching is good in all parts of the school. This, together with the excellent relationships and good standards of care, is why pupils achieve well. Pupils feel safe, secure and valued. This is a good place to learn. An exceptional range of activities is provided to enrich learning. This includes visits outside school, a good range of clubs and sporting events, work with visiting experts and links with community. These make a significant contribution to pupils' personal skills, self-esteem and academic progress.

The headteacher has been in post for many years and has a sustained enthusiasm to provide the best possible opportunities for all pupils to succeed. Many of these come from the valuable links with other schools, organisations and the local community. He is ably supported by an effective team of governors. Excellent teamwork ensures that all staff are focused upon raising standards and promoting the pupils' personal development and well-being. The school has maintained all the strengths seen at the last inspection and put right the weaknesses. It is self-critical and knows where it wants to go. Capacity to improve is therefore good, and the school gives good value for money.

### What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards further in ICT and make more use of technical skills to enhance learning in other subjects.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 2**

Achievement is good and standards are generally above average. Children in the Foundation Stage make good progress in all areas of learning. Where some cohorts begin school with standards below those expected for their age, all make good progress and are working close to the expected level for their age by the end of the Reception class. Those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities also make good progress.

Pupils make good progress through Key Stages 1 and 2. Given the small numbers in each year group and the differing abilities of the pupils, the school's results vary but show a pattern of consistently good achievement. The results of the 2006 national tests for 11 year olds were above average in English, mathematics and science and typify a broad picture of above average standards in the school. There is a growing proportion of pupils who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities. They make good progress, benefiting from good individual and small group support which is carefully planned to meet their needs and move their learning on. Standards in ICT are below average; pupils' progress has, until recently, been hampered by shortcomings in hardware.

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 1**

Pupils' personal development and well-being are outstanding. They enjoy coming to school, look after each other and are polite, friendly and considerate. As a result, they make good progress in a very happy and safe environment. Pupils feel special here; as one said, 'Because we are a small school, we do lots that other schools can't.' Attendance is above average and lateness is very rare. Behaviour is outstanding, both in lessons and outside. The great majority of parents agree. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent. Pupils are learning to think about their lives, and their place in the world, through the impressive range of experiences that the school provides. These include strong church links and many stimulating visits, such as their recent transformation into Second World War evacuees. Several visitors and organisations have commented on the pupils' thoughtful and sensible questions, as well as their politeness. Such visits also contribute to pupils' cultural awareness. They regularly work with people from a range of cultures and faiths. Some of these links led to a well received public performance, with other schools, as part of the Global Village project. Pupils learn to deal sensitively with others, both in their own and the wider community.

Pupils have many opportunities to make decisions and take responsibility. They respond well, for example in organising their own charity events for causes that interest them. Some pupils wrote and recorded their own radio documentary on the school and its community. This has been nominated for a national broadcasting award. They have a very good understanding of what is needed for a healthy life. The exceptional range of physical activity and sport on offer helps to build self-reliance and a willingness to try new things. Pupils leave this school as confident learners, with excellent social

skills and above average standards in literacy and mathematics. They are well prepared to succeed in the next stage of their education.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 2**

Teaching and learning are good in all classes. Lessons are well managed and teachers are good at making sure that work is suitably planned for mixed-age classes and is effective in meeting the needs and interests of individuals. Well qualified teaching assistants are effectively deployed and play an invaluable role in ensuring that those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are supported and that work meets their learning needs. Adults raise pupils' self-esteem and confidence through praise and encouragement. As a result, all feel valued and become involved. Pupils enjoy lessons and believe they are making good progress. As one said, 'Teachers really try to make lessons fun.' Teachers explain clearly what is to be learnt and what pupils have to do next in order to succeed. At the end of lessons, pupils are expected to reflect on what they have achieved. They like this because it helps both teachers and themselves to plan the next steps.

Just occasionally in lessons, the pace of learning slows because explanations go on too long. Although teachers are rightly concerned that no-one is left behind, some pupils are keen and able to proceed without the need for more advice. These would like more time for their independent work. However, progress is not affected because pupils listen well and work hard.

### **Curriculum and other activities**

#### **Grade: 2**

The curriculum is good, with an exceptional range of stimulating visits, clubs, events and visitors. The school is determined to ensure that its pupils are not disadvantaged by being in a small school. For example, facilities and staff at a local secondary school are used well to improve provision for physical education and French. Other visitors to the school provide expert teaching, for example in music and yoga. Pupils enjoy these lessons and are learning well. They talk enthusiastically about their many visits out of school, which have inspired them in history, art, drama, science, music and dance, and have been used well to support learning and secure good progress. Pupils gain much from their strong links with the local community. For example, their literacy skills are tested when working with local radio or writing for the parish magazine. Good opportunities are provided for outdoor education, including an extended visit to an outdoor centre where they can try new activities. This helps develop their independence and social skills and makes a positive contribution to their personal development.

The curriculum meets all requirements. Good emphasis is given to learning the basic skills in literacy and mathematics and to encouraging pupils to apply these skills in relevant and meaningful ways across the curriculum. For example, the visit to a Second

World War camp was used to stimulate high quality writing within the history topic. Pupils have not been able to use ICT sufficiently to support their learning across the curriculum. Until very recently equipment was of a poor standard. However, teachers are now using the new computers well to put this right.

The curriculum in the Foundation Stage is good. The children benefit from mixing with older children, but also enjoy good teaching and well chosen activities as a small separate group.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 2**

The school provides good care and support for its pupils. Arrangements for child protection and safeguarding are in place and meet government guidelines. With very few exceptions, parents are very satisfied with the way the school looks after their children. 'Our children are in very safe hands. We only wish Plumbland could carry on as a secondary school.' Good relationships mean that pupils are confident in seeking help or reassurance from adults when necessary.

Academic support and guidance are good. Pupils share responsibility for setting challenging targets for themselves; they like this and think it helps them to learn. Teachers' marking and advice given to pupils in lessons generally give good feedback on how well pupils have succeeded and generally good guidance on how to improve. In a few cases, advice and targets are too general to be of use to pupils, for example 'improve my punctuation'. These do not give sufficient detail on what aspects of punctuation need to be improved if they are to move their learning forward. Nevertheless, as so much of the teaching is in small groups and teachers know their pupils so well, the quality of on-going feedback and advice to individual pupils is good. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are well supported, as are those with personal worries.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 2**

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher has built a strong sense of shared purpose and a clear vision for future development within the small team. Teamwork is one of the reasons for pupils' good progress and outstanding personal development. Self-evaluation is accurate and used well to plan improvements. This includes a good analysis of assessment data which is used well to keep a watchful eye on every pupil's progress and to step in where weaknesses are identified. For example, a good analysis of strengths and weaknesses in progress and achievement in writing was used effectively to alter approaches in the teaching of writing. Similar analysis of the achievement of boys was used well to identify and implement strategies to improve their motivation.

Staff are well supported by well-informed governors who are committed to the future of the school. They have a broad range of expertise and are proud of the school's successes and good reputation.

Both teachers and assistants attend regular training to further improve the quality of teaching. As in most small schools, the headteacher has limited time to monitor the work in other classes but there are good links with local advisers and plans to use their expertise. The school is well placed to continue to improve.



## Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	<b>School Overall</b>
---	-----------------------

### Overall effectiveness

<b>How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?</b>	2
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1
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

<b>How well do learners achieve?</b>	2
The standards <sup>1</sup> 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	2

### Personal development and well-being

<b>How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The behaviour of learners	1
The attendance of learners	2
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2

### The quality of provision

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

<sup>1</sup> 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

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	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	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**

Plumbland CofE School

Parsonby

Aspatria

Wigton

Cumbria

CA7 2DQ

15 February 2007

Dear Pupils

As you know, I visited your school recently for a day. I am writing to thank you for being so helpful, welcoming and polite. I enjoyed my visit, especially watching you and your teachers in action. Many of you told me you were proud of your school. I think you should be.

I admired lots of things; they won't all fit into this short letter. I especially liked:

- the way you enjoy lessons and get involved. You work hard and are determined to improve
- your excellent behaviour, and the respect and consideration you show to adults and each other
- all the clubs, visitors and special events that we know you appreciate
- the way all the adults go the extra mile to make sure you are safe, happy, confident in your learning.

Inspectors usually leave some suggestions for things that could be even better. I know that you have recently had new computer equipment in your school and are beginning to make progress in using them. However, I think you could use your skills on the computer much more to help you in your writing, mathematics and science as well as in other subjects.

Yours sincerely

Keith Oglesby

Lead Inspector