

Threlkeld CofE Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	112276
Local Authority	Cumbria
Inspection number	289232
Inspection dates	22–23 May 2007
Reporting inspector	Arthur Allison

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	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	67
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Rev Bryan Rothwell
Headteacher	Mrs Katharine Horder
Date of previous school inspection	1 January 2002
School address	Blease Road Threlkeld Keswick Cumbria CA12 4RX
Telephone number	01768 779680
Fax number	01768 779680

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

Threlkeld is a very small school serving a rural area with some pupils coming from the nearby town of Keswick. Pupils are taught in three mixed-age classes. All pupils are of White British heritage. Very few pupils are known to be eligible for free school meals. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is higher than in most schools.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Threlkeld is a good school with some outstanding features. It provides good value for money. Parents have every confidence in the school. One expressed the view that ‘as well as receiving a very good, solid education via the National Curriculum, there are so many other opportunities afforded to the children.’

Children make good progress in the Foundation Stage and continue to make good progress thereafter to reach standards that are above average at the end of Year 6. This is due to quietly determined, perceptive leadership and good teaching that identifies what individual pupils need to do to reach challenging targets. Although pupils make good progress during Key Stage 1, standards in writing are not as high as in reading, and the school has rightly identified this as an area for development. The school’s sustained emphasis on raising standards in writing at Key Stage 2 has been successful, with writing standards now at the same good level as reading by the end of Year 6. The quality of pupils’ work in music is exceptionally high.

Teaching and learning are good. Teachers ensure that pupils know what they should be able to do by the end of the lesson and carefully question the pupils to check on their learning as the lesson proceeds. Marking of work, though satisfactory, does not always inform pupils about what they have achieved and what they need to do to improve further.

The good curriculum is excellently enriched by a range of activities. This enrichment contributes hugely to pupils’ achievement and enjoyment, particularly through the very many opportunities to participate in a wide range of sports, after-school clubs and residential visits. Links between subjects are made to make learning more purposeful, notably during weeks when lessons are planned round a theme; however, this successful practice is not yet fully embedded across the school.

The excellent level of pastoral care and good academic guidance encourages pupils to work hard and assess their progress. Staff are beginning to encourage older pupils to assess their progress towards their termly targets more frequently and to recognise when they have been achieved.

Outstanding personal development and sound basic skills prepare pupils well for the next stage of their education and beyond. Pupils are very polite, extremely well behaved and know how to stay safe. They thoroughly enjoy coming to school because they know that staff help them to do their best. They have an excellent understanding of the need for a balanced diet and a healthy lifestyle. Pupils make an outstanding contribution to the school and wider communities through the school council and in performing for parents and others. Older pupils take their responsibilities, for example as members of the ‘Friendship Squad’, very seriously.

Leadership and management are good. The school’s self-evaluation is very clear about what should be done to raise standards further. Capitalising on expertise within the school and drawing on outside expertise to the benefit of pupils is a very strong feature of the school’s work. Given the purposeful leadership, the good achievement of pupils and the tremendous commitment of all staff, it is evident that the school has good capacity for further improvement.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards of writing in Key Stage 1.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils of all abilities and backgrounds achieve well. Children's skills on entry to the school are usually below that which is typical for their age, particularly in language skills. Children who enter the Reception make good progress to reach most of the learning goals expected of them, though remaining slightly below average in language skills.

Pupils make good progress throughout the school to reach standards that are generally above average at the end of Key Stage 2, though standards in Key Stage 2 have been significantly above average twice in past five years. This was because of the differences between the groups of pupils. When boys outperform girls, or vice versa, this is because of differences in their attainment on entry to the school.

The school identified writing as an issue across the school, as standards were lower than those in reading. Action has been taken to raise standards in writing and have resulted in pupils making good progress in Key Stage 2; but improving writing is still a focus in Key Stage 1. The school usually meets or exceeds its challenging targets, but did not reach its target for higher attaining pupils in English in 2006. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make similar progress to other pupils because their learning and pastoral needs are identified early and they are given effective support.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils' personal development and behaviour are outstanding, as is their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Pupils are adamant that there is no bullying of any kind. They thoroughly enjoy coming to school, which is reflected in their consistently good attendance. Pupils are well aware of how to stay safe. They know there is always an adult to turn to when needed. Their understanding of the importance of healthy lifestyles is exceptional. They fully appreciate the improved lunchtime menus and value highly the many opportunities for physical exercise. Pupils' excellent attitudes to work, good achievement and very high quality relationships with their peers and adults enable them to become very mature and thoughtful. This is shown in issues identified for the school council meeting agendas and the subsequent debates, such as the one observed on 'Bus Buddies', which are attended by the whole school. The orderly conduct of the meeting and quality of pupils' contributions was very impressive. Pupils make a tremendous contribution to the school and wider communities. There are many examples of this, including the 'Friendship Squad', writing for the Parish Magazine and, because they have a very mature concern for those less fortunate than themselves, the money they raise for charities such as the Juniper Trust.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are consistently good. Teachers have good subject knowledge and expertise; they ensure that pupils know what they should know or be able to do by the end of the lesson. Good planning incorporating challenging, well-matched tasks takes account of previous learning. Planning in the Foundation Stage provides a good balance of adult-led and independent learning activities, indoors and outdoors. All staff have high expectations of work

and behaviour. The management of pupils is good as is the choice and use of resources, particularly the interactive whiteboards, which are used well in all classes to stimulate and maintain the interest of pupils. Careful questioning by teachers helps them and their pupils to know what progress has been made in the lesson. Teaching assistants make a very good contribution to pupils' learning because they are deployed very well to provide guidance and support for those who need it. Marking is satisfactory, but there are insufficient comments to help pupils know what to do to improve in the short term.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The good curriculum meets the pupils' different needs and contributes well to their enjoyment of school. The emphasis on personal development pervades the whole curriculum and helps all pupils to become good learners. Links between subjects, as in the themed weeks, are successful in helping to develop pupils' skills in literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT). The school intends to build on this good work through well-thought out curriculum planning. The school also recognises the need for a greater planned emphasis on speaking and listening skills, as in the focus on adventurous words, to help raise standards in writing.

The quality and range of activities to enrich the curriculum are excellent. Pupils enjoy learning French in lessons and at the language club. Visits and visitors enhance the learning opportunities considerably. Pupils are eagerly anticipating the forthcoming residential visit with its many adventurous activities. The school has good links with other schools and organisations to enhance its provision. Pupils across the school fully appreciate the wide range of sporting opportunities, some of which draw on outside expertise, and other clubs. The provision for music and the consequent opportunities to sing and perform for others, such as the production of 'Mary Poppins' in 2006, raises their confidence and self-esteem.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Care, guidance and support are good and contribute very well to pupils' progress and enjoyment. Pastoral care is excellent. Staff know their pupils very well and the inclusive ethos ensures that they feel welcome and cared for. Pupils with learning difficulties are well supported and make good progress. The school makes good provision for gifted and talented pupils in lessons and by activity days in conjunction with other schools.

Procedures for safeguarding children are robust. Child protection arrangements and risk assessments are in place. Good guidance is given on living safely and healthily.

The school's assessment and tracking procedures ensure that teachers, pupils and parents have an informed view of academic and personal progress. Staff are beginning to encourage older pupils to be aware of when they have achieved these termly targets. All assess their own progress at the end of term and most are able to suggest how they might improve further. The school works very well with parents and other agencies so helping all pupils to make good progress.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher leads by example. She provides very good leadership through her drive and vision to help every child achieve as well as possible. All teaching and non-teaching staff very strongly support her, so the school works together as a team. The deployment of staff, particularly the employment of a specialist teacher for music, is an example of good use of financial resources. Through its self-evaluation, the school has an accurate view of how well it is doing.

Strategies are in place to improve provision and so raise standards, particularly in writing. The school has made good progress since the previous inspection. All issues identified at the previous inspection have been successfully addressed, notably standards in writing in Key Stage 2. The provision for children in the Reception class has improved. Procedures for monitoring teaching and learning have improved. Resources for ICT are better, notably the interactive whiteboards, which are used very effectively to arouse and maintain the interest of pupils.

The views of parents and pupils are valued and acted on appropriately; such as, their requests for a wider range of clubs for pupils of all ages. The governors fulfil their responsibilities well because they know the school well and are strongly committed to helping it to improve through their supportive yet challenging approach.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaints about school inspection', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

Annex A

Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	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	2

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	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

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.

Annex A

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	1
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

24 May 2007

Dear Children

Inspection of Threlkeld CofE Primary School, Keswick, CA12 4RX

I thoroughly enjoyed my visit to your school. I particularly enjoyed talking to you in class, in the dining hall and when the group of older pupils were telling me what they liked about the school. I was very impressed by your friendliness, politeness and your confidence, especially during the school council meeting, which was conducted so well that I was absolutely amazed.

I realise why you are so proud of your school and enjoy coming because:

- you are keen to answer questions and work hard in lessons and behave extremely well
- you are proud to take on responsibilities, such as being members of your school council and of the 'Friendship Squad'
- you really appreciate the help you get from all the staff to help you to make good progress
- you enjoy the learning opportunities, particularly when teachers use interactive whiteboards to make learning interesting, and when you take part in the wide range of sporting activities, clubs and the residential visits that make school so exciting
- you understand the importance of helping others less fortunate than yourselves, for example the money you raised for the Juniper Trust
- the school knows what needs to be done to help you to do better.

As a result of what I saw and what you said to me, I have asked the school to consider how staff can help you to reach higher standards in your writing, particularly the younger children.

It was a pleasure to visit your school. Keep working hard so that you continue to do well.

Yours sincerely

Mr Allison

The Inspector