

Selside Endowed C of E Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	112327
Local Authority	Cumbria
Inspection number	289246
Inspection dates	19–20 June 2007
Reporting inspector	June Tracey

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	72
School	
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Stephen Procter
Headteacher	Mrs Caronne Field
Date of previous school inspection	1 March 2001
School address	Selside Kendal Cumbria LA8 9LB
Telephone number	01539 823649
Fax number	01539 823649

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

Selside is a small primary school in a rural farming community near Kendal. The school is popular and attracts a significant proportion of its pupils from beyond the immediate catchment area. Pupils come from a range of backgrounds. Socio-economic indicators are broadly average. Pupils are taught in four mixed-age classes, one for pupils up to the age of seven and three for pupils age seven to eleven. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is average but numbers vary significantly from one year group to another. Almost all pupils are of White British heritage and none is at the early stage of learning English. When children start school, their attainment is broadly average but it fluctuates from year to year depending on the ability range of the small year groups. A significant minority of children have weaknesses in language and communication skills on entry.

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 that is at the heart of the isolated community that it serves. Some aspects of its work are outstanding, not least the way it opens up opportunities for pupils to prepare for life in contemporary society whilst preserving the traditions and culture of their local heritage. Parents value this enormously and contribute to it, for example, by working with pupils to teach them rural crafts. The spirit of the school is captured well in a parent's comment, typical of others: 'This is a truly fantastic school. We feel lucky that our children have such a great start to their school life.' The school is vibrant and full of exciting work. Pupils absorb themselves wholeheartedly in whatever they are doing. They interact well with each other and benefit academically and socially from being able to work with pupils from different age groups. The school's success is underpinned by the outstanding leadership of the headteacher and the work of a dedicated team of teachers and other adults. Their commitment is exemplified by the manner in which they provide for the curriculum and beyond in restricted accommodation and without the facility of a staffroom.

Children settle quickly when they join the Reception Year. The quality of provision in the mixed-age class for pupils up to the age of seven is excellent. It is planned to foster independent learning, which it does very well. This ensures that the youngest children make good progress in building on their current skills and achieve well as they learn new ones. Most children reach the expected standards when they enter Year 1. Pupils learn to take responsibility and are encouraged to talk about how well they are doing and what they could do better. Skilful management and teaching in the mixed-age classes throughout the school enable pupils of all abilities and ages to achieve well and make good progress. Teaching is good but occasionally teachers do not involve pupils interactively enough or provide sufficient challenge in the introductory part of the session. Standards, by Year 6, are above average for their age. The well-developed procedures for assessment are being used effectively to check pupils' progress. They are being refined regularly to increase the consistency of challenge for every pupil and to raise standards further. Samples of pupils' work seen in books and in displays about the school are indicative of pupils' pride in their work and of the pleasure they gain from practical and creative activities. This is because of the consistently good teaching that stimulates pupils and makes them want to do well. It is also a contributory factor to the pupils' excellent personal development and exemplary behaviour. Pupils respond well to the school's expectations. By the time they leave the school, they are confident young people with a growing sense of maturity. Pupils say that they enjoy school. One parent said, 'My daughter laughs a lot there.' Pupils put into practice what they learn about healthy living; for example, by joining the 'walking bus' once a week on its journey to school through the local countryside.

Leadership and management are good. The school is innovative and active in its evolution. Parents are kept fully informed about changes, which are carried through thoughtfully and sensitively. Consequently, there is a corporate will to make them succeed. The school provides pupils with a very good start to their education. It prepares them well for the next stage and for life outside the classroom. There is good capacity for the school to sustain its current momentum and to improve still further.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure a consistent level of challenge for all pupils in order to raise standards even further in English, mathematics and science.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils achieve well from their starting points because teachers instil in them a will to succeed. Standards are above average although results in the national tests vary from year to year because the range of abilities in the small year groups is wide and, sometimes, unbalanced. In 2006, pupils' results in national tests in Year 6 were above average. Analysis of data from the school's rigorous assessments indicate that individual pupils make good progress in each stage, and overall, from entry to Year 6. This is equally true of higher ability pupils and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Pupils' good response in discussion about progress towards their targets has the potential to raise standards further. Girls achieve slightly better than boys, as they do nationally, but the gap is narrowing because of the strenuous efforts being made to raise boys' achievement. The strong emphasis on drama and speaking and listening is raising pupils' confidence in communicating with others and improving the quality, accuracy and content of their writing, some of which is in advance of that of pupils of similar age. Pupils' mathematical knowledge and skills steadily improve as their confidence grows in tackling investigative work. Children in the Reception Year make good progress and achieve well. The emphasis on social and speaking skills ensures that they quickly become independent and confident learners. Evidence from the work on display, for example in design and technology, indicates that standards across the curriculum are generally above average. The school holds the Activemark for physical education, which is a credit to the pupils' and teachers' tenacity in the light of the restricted facilities in the school for physical activities.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils' personal development and well-being are excellent, as is their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Attendance is good because pupils thoroughly enjoy every aspect of school life and do not want to miss out on anything. They learn to express themselves clearly and sensitivity because plentiful opportunities are provided for them to develop their speaking and listening skills. Pupils behave very well, with respect for the impact of their actions on other people. They grow in confidence and self-esteem because they are closely involved in assessing their progress towards realistic and achievable targets. Pupils thrive on sharing experiences with others. They respond well when given additional responsibilities; such as, when they take on the role of 'buddies' in Years 2 and 6. Pupils say that they feel safe in school and that everyone looks after each other. The sense of well-being in the school supports this view. Pupils are proud of their achievements, and say so. They respond well to encouragement to lead healthy lifestyles; for example, by producing recipes for food in their lunchboxes. The school's provision helps pupils to gain a balanced view of life in contemporary society and the sustainability of lifestyles in rural communities. Pupils' gains in knowledge, understanding and the use of skills in literacy, numeracy and technology are preparing them well for the future.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are good. Pupils progress well towards becoming independent learners because they are encouraged to reason things out for themselves before seeking help from

adults. Teachers provide good opportunities for pupils to learn, understand and make use of basic skills in language, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT). The application of knowledge and skills is paramount in all lessons. Pupils enjoy challenges, particularly when they require lateral thinking across a range of subjects. A typical example was older pupils' linguistic, artistic and technological approach in contemplating the journey of a river from its source to the end of its journey. Lessons generally move at a good pace that sustains pupils' interest. Occasionally, teachers do not involve pupils interactively enough or provide sufficient challenge in the introductory part of the session. The marking of pupils' work is very effective in helping them to understand what strategies were successful and what could be improved. Improvement over time in the samples of work scrutinised during the inspection indicates that pupils take note of, and act upon, teachers' written comments.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The curriculum is broad, rich and relevant. It is designed thoughtfully to build on pupils' prior learning without repetition. Planning for the various subjects is closely interwoven so pupils learn to transfer knowledge and skills seamlessly. Practical and creative skills develop well because they are linked to pupils' experiences. The rural workshops are very popular. Parents value the way these are helping to preserve interest in the traditional skills of the local community. One parent commented, 'How many other schools would bring in a horse and farrier?' Good use is made of drama to encourage pupils to share, and sometimes argue out, their ideas and views. Creative arts are developed well, within lessons and through partnerships with skilled practitioners from outside the school. The curriculum is underpinned by very good, finely tuned, provision for pupils' personal development. The Youth Group in Years 5 and 6 is a typical example. It is assisting a small group of boys to work together as a team and to resolve problems by adapting their thinking and approach when facing a conflict of opinions. The school's work has a strong emphasis on practical, outdoor and extra-curricular activities. All are good fun and educationally stimulating.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Provision for care, guidance and support is excellent. It reflects a personalised approach to every pupil's learning and very close working relationships with parents. Gifted and talented pupils and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are very well catered for and all pupils benefit from the recently upgraded, rigorous assessment system that charts their progress and moves them on to new challenges. This is effective because pupils are involved regularly in assessing their own work and have step-by-step guides showing them what needs to be done to reach the next target. The school is actively seeking ways to use assessment in order to raise standards even higher. The organisation of the mixed-age classes works to pupils' advantage because it incorporates flexibility for pupils to work with others of similar ability in different age groups. Teaching assistants are deployed well; they are fully involved in the planning and assessment of pupils' work. Safeguarding and risk assessment procedures are firmly in place, as are those for child protection. Parents feel reassured by the regular information and support they receive during their children's time at the school. The help given on entry and at the time of transition to secondary education is highly valued.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good and the school provides good value for money. It is highly thought of by parents because they feel that their children are enjoying a good start to their education whilst developing into well-rounded, healthy young people who have thought and concern for what happens in the world about them. This is due to the commitment of staff and the determination of the governors to provide the best they can for pupils in their care. Governance is good. Governors play an active role in the school's life and are supportive of its plans for improvement.

The school accurately evaluates the impact of its provision and responds effectively where it sees opportunities for improvement. Priorities in the school's development plan are realistic and achievable but some are dependent on extensions and adaptations to the accommodation and grounds. Staff ensure that pupils are not deprived of opportunities to enjoy the full benefits of the curriculum but the pressure on time and facilities is excessive. Classrooms are used fully throughout the day for lessons, assemblies and lunchtime provision. In other respects, the school is resourced well with good quality, up-to-date equipment, such as for information and communication technology. The school has made good improvement since the previous inspection, particularly in the way it uses assessment and in the way the mixed-age classes have been organised for continuity of provision and to provide scope for independent learning. The momentum is being sustained well, with the full support of parents.

Annex A

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?	1
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	1
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	1
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	1

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?	1
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.

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

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

21 June 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Selside Endowed C of E Primary School, Cumbria, LA8 9LB.

Thank you for your warm welcome and for talking to me so enthusiastically about your school. I felt that I knew a lot about your work and achievements after the two days and I left with the impression that you are really proud to be pupils at Selside.

I think that your school is a good one. Some aspects of its work are excellent. The staff help you to develop very good personal skills that will set you up for life. It was good to see how well you get on together and also to see you sharing ideas and assessing your own and your friends' work. This helps you to be self-critical, which is a sensible way of learning because it is good practice to learn through improving on mistakes. I liked the way you threw yourselves wholeheartedly into your learning; for example, when some older boys made and cooked bread rolls and sausages from the basic ingredients. The same was true in the Foundation/Key Stage 1 class when you observed and drew in detail the features of live snails. You are all developing good practical and creative skills, which will serve you well in the future.

Your school works hard to encourage you to be fit and healthy and to understand the importance of learning about rural life as well as about that in cities and the country as a whole. You are very fortunate in being able to take part in Rural Workshops that enable you to experience the traditional crafts of your heritage. You have many, as yet unknown, opportunities ahead of you so you need to be as well prepared as possible. To do this, I have asked your school to help you to reach even higher standards in English, mathematics and science. You can play your part by keeping your targets in mind when you are working independently and listening carefully at the start of lessons.

You have a lovely school in beautiful surroundings, which I know that you appreciate. Take care of it.

Thank you once again and very best wishes for the future.

Yours sincerely

June Tracey

Inspector