



Scotby C of E Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 112403
Local Authority Cumbria
Inspection number 296378
Inspection dates 11–12 January 2007
Reporting inspector Marguerite McCloy HMI

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Park Road
School category	Foundation		Scotby, Carlisle
Age range of pupils	4–11		Cumbria, CA4 8AT
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01228 513270
Number on roll (school)	266	Fax number	01228 513049
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Mr Stephen Bolger
		Headteacher	Miss Jackie Watson (Acting)
Date of previous school inspection	1 December 2000		

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and two Additional Inspectors. A section 48 inspection of the school's collective worship took place at the same time, carried out by an inspector from the Diocese of Carlisle.

Description of the school

Scotby is a popular and oversubscribed primary school on the outskirts of Carlisle. It is of average size, following a steady growth in numbers over the last decade. The school serves the villages of Scotby and Wetheral with an increasing number of children joining from outside its immediate area.

Pupils come from generally favourable social and economic backgrounds and a much lower than average proportion claim free school meals. The number of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is well below the national average. Most pupils are from White British backgrounds and very few speak English as an additional language. The school has recently achieved the Activemark award.

Scotby's Out of School Club, registered in 2005, provides before and after school care for up to 48 pupils. This facility was inspected on 18 May 2006 and found to be satisfactory. The report is available on Ofsted's web site.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Scotby C of E Primary School is providing a satisfactory and improving education for its pupils. There are several good features which indicate that the school is moving forward positively despite a period of disruption to its leadership and governance.

By the time pupils reach the end of Key Stage 2 standards are above average in all core subjects. Given their starting points, this represents satisfactory achievement over time, although progress in lessons is generally good and this bodes well for future improvement. Standards in writing lag behind those attained in other areas and this is a focus of the school's development planning which is already paying dividends in improved results in 2006. However, a gap remains between the achievement of boys and girls in literacy which is more marked than that seen nationally. In addition, the number of pupils reaching the higher level in English, mathematics and science is not as high as it could be given the good skills and knowledge the children bring with them and the good support of their families.

Children receive a positive start to their education with good quality provision in the Reception classes. Very good relationships across the school and the high level of care and guidance they receive contribute well to pupils' personal development and well-being. As a result they enjoy school and attendance and punctuality are excellent.

Leadership and management are satisfactory overall with a number of emerging strengths. The school's self-evaluation is generally accurate, although it graded itself over generously in one or two respects. The school's capacity to improve is currently satisfactory.

The school has made satisfactory progress since the last inspection, and standards in science have improved. However, during an unsettled period since summer 2005, there has been disruption to the senior management structure of the school, some uncertainty among staff and divided opinion on the part of parents. This was reflected in the parent questionnaire responses and in discussions with staff. The situation has impaired the impact of leadership and management across the school. Staff training and development prior to the last academic year 2005/06 had been minimal, and compounded by financial constraints resulting from a deficit budget. This situation has now improved considerably following a recent refocusing of whole-school priorities which has led to an increase in staff training. However, the school recognises that there is some catching up to do in providing opportunities for senior and middle managers to monitor teaching and learning. To the credit of the acting headteacher and her good leadership skills, the school has continued to run relatively smoothly throughout the difficult period and pupils have remained happy and settled. There is strong staff teamwork and a shared vision.

Pupils are cared for very well. Consequently, their personal development, including spiritual, moral and social development, is good.

The quality of teaching is good overall. Whilst there has been recent improvement in the assessment of pupils' learning, more needs to be done to ensure that pupils' progress is monitored and tracked consistently.

Despite difficulties within the school resulting from unavoidable staff absence at senior management level, the vast majority of parents have great confidence in the effectiveness of teachers educating their children. In the words of one parent, 'Despite difficulties and media attention, the staff have worked relentlessly to ensure that the needs of all pupils are always paramount.' This statement typifies the views expressed by most parents.

The high level of written responses to the inspection questionnaire shows that many parents still have concerns about the possible effect of events during the last 18 months on their children's education. They are keen to see that all concerned with the school can put this behind them and get on with the business of moving Scotby Primary forward to strive for excellence.

What the school should do to improve further

- Challenge the most able pupils so that more reach the higher levels at the end of Key Stage 2.
- Ensure that the school's recently developed systems for tracking pupils' achievement and setting challenging targets are applied consistently in all classes.
- Strengthen management structures and develop the role of middle leaders to play a more significant part in self-evaluation and school improvement.
- Strengthen the school's strategies for narrowing the gap in performance between boys and girls in English, particularly writing.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Children enter the school with above average skills and virtually all have attended private nurseries or pre-school groups. By the end of their Reception year most children are meeting, and a significant number are exceeding, the learning goals expected of them. Particular strengths are seen in the children's speaking and social skills and their ability to work independently by the time they enter Year 1.

Results in the 2006 end of Key Stage 1 assessments show that attainment is well above the national average in reading and mathematics and above average in writing. However, this masks a significant disparity in English, particularly writing, where boys' attainment is considerably lower than girls. In addition, the proportion of 7 year olds reaching above average levels in writing is lower than expected given their starting points. The 2005 Key Stage 2 test results indicated that pupils who should have been capable of attaining above average levels in writing failed to do so. The school is aware of this issue and is working on strategies to reduce the gap between boys' and girls' achievement in writing, and ensure that more able pupils reach the higher level. The school's recent work in this area has already led to improved writing results in 2006.

By the end of Key Stage 2, attainment is consistently above average in the national tests for English, mathematics and science. However, the school's best results in 2003 were followed by a period which showed a downward trend. The 2006 results indicated a recovery when results were back on track, although based on what pupils should be expected to achieve the majority are making satisfactory progress rather than good. This is seen in the proportion of pupils reaching the higher level in each of the core subjects by the end of Year 6. Whilst still generally above average, it is not as high as it should be when compared to their skills on entry to the school and their achievements in Key Stage 1 assessments.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

During their time in school pupils make good progress in developing personal skills and attributes which help them become thoughtful, mature and articulate young people. Their enjoyment of school is demonstrated by their excellent attendance and punctuality, positive attitudes in lessons and very good behaviour. Pupils enjoy taking on responsibilities such as being play leaders. Through the school and class councils they make well considered suggestions which make a positive contribution to the life of the school. For example, they state that, 'buying playtime equipment has worked out quite well... play leaders help the younger children. It bonds them'. Pupils say that bullying is not a problem and they know who to turn to if they encounter difficulties. Because of a strong emphasis on promoting healthy lifestyles pupils are aware of, and able to make, healthy choices.

Cultural development, although satisfactory, is not planned sufficiently to increase pupils' depth of understanding of other cultures. Pupils' spiritual, moral and social development is good. The school provides many opportunities for pupils to reflect on and consider the points of view of others. This leads to them cooperating well and demonstrating a caring attitude towards others. This is also clear in their commitment to the good causes they support and the funds they raise for charity. Residential visits add enjoyment to learning, and pupils are prepared well for the next stage in their education.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Throughout the school, teachers are professional and keen to provide the best possible education for their pupils. Children get a good start in the Reception classes, where teachers provide exciting activities that develop the pupils' confidence, knowledge and practical skills. This is built on in Key Stages 1 and 2 where teaching is mostly good. The best teaching skilfully links subjects together so that pupils can learn in a meaningful and inspirational way. In Year 2, for example, pupils became totally absorbed in activities resulting from a visit

to see the play, 'Robin Hood'. As a result, pupils applied and improved their skills in literacy, art and design and information and communication technology (ICT). Exciting and stimulating use of resources are often used to bring lessons to life, for example, a DVD clip of Harry Potter motivated aspiring writers in Year 5. Although the most able pupils progress steadily, their skills and talents are not always exploited enough. Recent advances in the way pupils' progress is monitored and tracked are starting to improve achievement across the school, although the impact is still not fully evident in test results. The quality of marking varies, and whilst there are some very good systems, for example in Years 4 and 5 classes in writing, these are not always applied across the school.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is good for the large majority of pupils and inspires them to learn. The needs of the relatively few pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are well catered for, but provision for the most able is yet to be planned carefully enough. Good improvements in subject planning over the last four terms have added meaning and relevance to lessons. Staff are increasingly exploiting links between all subjects to enable pupils to apply confidently their good standards in literacy, numeracy and ICT to a variety of situations. This is starting to boost achievement across the school in all subjects. The addition of French and the strengthened provision for art and design broadens the curriculum. The recent acquisition of the Active Mark reflects the good sports provision. Pupils of all ages enthusiastically attend the good range of extra-curricular activities recently provided for them, and there is a good take up of these opportunities. Pupils love the art club, many talk enthusiastically about going to sports practice and others are totally absorbed in a Warhammer club. In Years 5 and 6, pupils' knowledge and understanding of the world is extended by participating in annual residential visits. Good provision for personal, social and health education and citizenship prepares pupils well to be healthy and fit citizens of the future.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Care, guidance and support are good. Staff are very caring and sensitive to the pupils' personal needs and prioritise their safety. Arrangements to safeguard learners meet requirements. The pupils' involvement in assessment has improved significantly in recent months and, although still not consistent in all classes, is starting to boost pupils' learning. Pupils' attainment and progress is now systematically monitored and pupils are increasingly aware of what they need to do to get better. Effective support for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities enables them to be fully integrated into all elements of school life. Support is satisfactory for the most able but not effective enough to get the best from these pupils.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Leadership and management are satisfactory overall, with some emerging strengths. The acting headteacher's calm and purposeful leadership has been instrumental in bringing the school through its recent difficulties with minimal effect on pupils' education. She has secured the respect of parents, staff and governors who acknowledge her positive contribution and reflective leadership. Through a range of carefully chosen initiatives and staff development, the acting headteacher is working effectively to develop the strengths of an increasingly settled and highly committed staff team. She provides clear educational direction for the school and has an accurate view of its strengths and weaknesses. Recently completed school improvement plans show that there is a clear view of its key priorities for development and action planning is robust.

The role of subject leaders is underdeveloped and assessment information is not used consistently enough to help all pupils make the best possible progress. Key post holders now have clear job descriptions to guide their actions in developing and monitoring their subjects and this is starting to have a positive impact on achievement in lessons observed by inspectors.

The school's leaders recognise that there are improvements to be made: in standards of writing, in achievement of boys and the most able pupils, and in the assessment and tracking of pupils' progress. These issues have already started to be tackled, although the impact of the school's work is not yet reflected in higher attainment in national tests and assessments.

Satisfactory governance makes sure that the school meets statutory requirements. Governors are now beginning to keep a closer check on academic standards and achievement. Guidance from the acting headteacher and training provided by the local authority and diocese are helping to increase governors' awareness of their role in the monitoring and evaluation of the school's performance. The school's budget is being monitored and managed appropriately, and plans are in place to resolve the financial deficit. The school 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?	3
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	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

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

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	1
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?	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3
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	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

To the pupils of:

Scotby C of E Primary School

Park Road

Scotby

Carlisle

Cumbria

CA4 8AT

15 January 2007

Dear Pupils

As you know, inspectors visited your school recently. We enjoyed joining your lessons and were very interested to hear about all the things you do and what you thought about your school. Scotby is providing a satisfactory and improving education for each of you, and there are a lot of good things in your school. Here are some of the things we found:

- you reach good and sometimes very good standards in your work
- your behaviour in lessons and around school is very good, and you get on well with each other and with the adults
- attendance and punctuality are excellent – well done to you and your families!
- you really enjoy the after-school clubs and visits that the school provides
- all of the adults in school take good care of you so that you feel safe and happy
- teaching is good overall and your learning is best when teachers link subjects together and make lessons exciting and active.

We have asked the acting headteacher and staff to make sure that everyone uses the school's assessment and target setting systems well. This will mean that each of you will know exactly how well you are doing and what you need to improve in order to reach even higher levels in your work, to the best of your ability. The school has already started to help the boys to do better in writing, and some more work can be done to help you with this. We know that the leadership of the school has been unsettled in the last 18 months, but are pleased to see that your acting headteacher and the staff are working hard to make sure it doesn't affect your education. We think that each of you, and your parents, will also work together with the school to move forward and make Scotby as good as it can possibly be!

We wish you all the best for the future.

Marguerite McCloy HMI

Lead Inspector