

# Kirkby Stephen Primary School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	112180
<b>Local Authority</b>	Cumbria
<b>Inspection number</b>	301701
<b>Inspection dates</b>	28–29 June 2007
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	George Crowther

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School	189
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mr Donald Marston
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr Michael Buckler
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	1 May 2003
<b>School address</b>	Nateby Road Kirkby Stephen Cumbria CA17 4AE
<b>Telephone number</b>	01768 371387
<b>Fax number</b>	01768 371387

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

## Description of the school

This is an average sized primary school. About three-quarters of the pupils live in the town; the rest travel from further away and many have a farming background. There is no significant social and economic deprivation, but there are elements of disadvantage. A below average proportion of pupils is eligible for free school meals. Pupils' attainment when they start school is below average. The proportion with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is above average. Almost all the pupils are from White British backgrounds and none is at the early stages of learning English. The school has International and Healthy Schools awards. At the time of the inspection, the headteacher was absent from school.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 2

Kirkby Stephen is a good school that is working determinedly through a period of uncertainty. Good teamwork is sustaining the quality of learning in lessons and is ensuring a positive and happy environment that supports the development of pupils' personal qualities effectively. This is further enhanced by a strong emphasis on meeting pupils' individual needs within a caring community. As a result, most pupils are making good progress and are developing the confidence and skills that will prepare them well for the next stage of their education.

Children achieve well in the Reception class. A well-planned range of practical activities captures their interest and helps them to learn quickly. Good teaching leads to good progress in all aspects of children's learning. In Years 1 and 2, the pupils continue to make at least satisfactory progress. Interesting lessons help them to build their skills steadily. Good teaching in many lessons enables pupils to achieve well in most aspects of their work. In Years 3 to 6, pupils continue to improve many of their skills quickly. In English and mathematics, learning is well matched to the needs of pupils of varying abilities. In science, however, pupils largely do the same work and there are too few activities that encourage independent learning, so achievement is satisfactory rather than good. Standards in the current Year 6 are broadly average, even though the group contains a high proportion of pupils who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

The pupils enjoy school and are usually well motivated in lessons. Almost all pupils behave well, but there are a few who find it hard to behave well all the time. Relationships are good and pupils of all ages mix together happily. The pupils have a sound understanding of healthy lifestyles and they feel safe and cared for. They contribute well to the school community, for example, through the school council, and have an exceptionally good understanding of the world community through their strong links with other countries and cultures. Pupils' secure basic skills and their well-developed personal qualities prepare them well for the future. The curriculum is broad and interesting, which helps pupils to enjoy their learning and achieve well in many subjects.

Leadership and management are satisfactory. Leaders have created a strong staff team that wants to improve the quality of education for the pupils. Improvement has been made since the last inspection. There are, however, weaknesses in aspects of management. Systems to track pupils' progress are too complicated and do not provide clear information that helps teachers to identify pupils who are not doing well enough. There are too few checks on the quality of teaching and learning. As a result, whilst leaders are aware of many of the school's strengths and weaknesses, self-evaluation does not explain these convincingly or identify the way forward. Nonetheless, leaders are ensuring that pupils continue to achieve well and so the school provides good value for money.

### What the school should do to improve further

- Improve pupils' achievement in science.
- Put in place clear and effective systems for tracking pupils' progress so that potential underachievement can be identified and tackled.
- Develop rigorous use of self-evaluation to identify ways to improve pupils' achievement.

## Achievement and standards

### Grade: 2

Achievement is good. Pupils start school with below average attainment and, by Year 6, make good progress to reach broadly average standards. They make good progress in the Reception class because the activities are stimulating and the staff support learning effectively. By the time children join Year 1, standards are usually just below average. Pupils continue to make at least satisfactory progress in Years 1 and 2, responding to good teaching and building their basic skills well. Current standards in Year 2 are broadly average, but results in national tests have varied from average to well above average depending on the ability of each group of pupils.

Progress in Years 3 to 6 is good, particularly for the less able pupils. Good teaching and work that is well matched to pupils' needs lead to good achievement in English and mathematics, but achievement in science is satisfactory rather than good because the work is not challenging enough. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are well supported, which enables them to be fully involved in all lessons and to make good progress.

## Personal development and well-being

### Grade: 2

Pupils say they enjoy school because there are lots of interesting things to do, such as the recent multicultural week. They are generally confident and positive about their work, which helps them to be productive learners. A typical comment was, 'I like the lessons because they are interesting and there is always something new to learn'. The pupils are friendly and mostly well behaved, but staff say that the behaviour of a few older pupils can be unpredictable.

Good relationships are evident in lessons and at playtimes. One pupil spoke for many when she said, 'Everyone is friendly and they help you if you are unhappy'. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. A wide range of experiences, particularly in fostering knowledge of other cultures, develops pupils' understanding of themselves and their place in the wider world. Pupils know how to make healthy choices in the food they eat and the exercise they take, but are not always sure why these are important. They are aware of safety issues, both in and out of school. Through class and school councils, pupils play a valuable part in shaping their school community. Sound levels of basic skills and a good introduction to the world of work through mini-enterprise schemes prepare pupils well for the future.

## Quality of provision

### Teaching and learning

#### Grade: 2

Good teaching, interesting lessons and work that is generally well planned to meet individual needs, help pupils to learn well. Whole-class sessions usually move at a good pace so pupils are attentive and well motivated. Occasionally, however, pupils are required to listen for too long before starting their tasks. Teachers often make good use of interactive whiteboards to demonstrate and explain new learning and they question pupils skilfully to check understanding. They use a good variety of methods to help pupils learn. For example, pupils in Years 3 and 4 played a game identifying letter sounds and then worked in small groups to generate rhyming words, which helped to enrich the quality of their writing. Good relationships help teachers to organise and manage learning well so that pupils know exactly what is expected of them. Good

support for learning from teachers and teaching assistants helps pupils to do their best. Teachers' use of informal assessment to keep track of pupils' progress is satisfactory. In some of the books seen, however, the marking of pupils' work is inconsistent and does not always show how they can improve.

## **Curriculum and other activities**

### **Grade: 2**

The good curriculum meets the needs of pupils and successfully promotes their personal development. Reception children work in a well-planned classroom, with an exciting curriculum that encourages them to enjoy learning. Most learning takes place indoors because there is no dedicated area for children to pursue the curriculum outdoors. The curriculum for English and mathematics is good but work in science provides too few chances for investigation. Pupils say they enjoy school and the links they have with people in other countries. These multicultural activities enrich learning and provide outstanding opportunities for pupils to develop a wide range of academic and personal skills. Pupils' good personal development owes much to a strong programme of personal, social and health education. Pupils take part in a wide range of sporting and musical activities, many of which are provided through good links with the local secondary school. From their early years in school, pupils have the opportunity to learn a foreign language.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 2**

The school is a friendly and caring environment in which pupils feel valued. A typical comment was, 'We feel safe at school because the adults look after us'. The staff work very hard to ensure that pupils are happy, safe and ready to learn, and all the required safeguarding procedures are in place. Good links with outside agencies give extra support to pupils. Academic guidance is satisfactory. In lessons, teachers and teaching assistants have good skills in supporting pupils' learning, particularly those who have difficulties. This enables pupils to make good progress. Across the school, however, systems to track pupils' progress are weak, which limits the ability of the staff to identify and tackle potential underachievement. The best practice is in tracking the progress of pupils who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 3**

The deputy headteacher, well supported by the staff team and governors, is leading the school effectively. Between them, they are sustaining the positive ethos of the school and enabling the pupils to achieve well. In their own classrooms, teachers are doing a good job, and staff who are responsible for important aspects of the school's work are leading developments effectively. There are, however, weaknesses in the management of the school.

Individual teachers keep clear records of pupils' progress. However, the recently introduced whole-school systems to check on pupils' attainment and track their progress are too complicated and do not help teachers to identify pupils who are underachieving. Managers are not checking carefully enough on the quality of teaching and learning so that weaknesses can be identified and tackled. The overall lack of clarity about the effectiveness of the school is reflected in weak self-evaluation. With few exceptions, parents have positive views about the work of the school,

although some expressed concerns about the way in which the poor behaviour of a minority of pupils had been dealt with. Governors have a good understanding of what the school does well and what needs to improve, but are currently occupied with challenging staffing issues. They have made a good start in gathering information about the quality of education in the school. Working with the strong staff team, this gives the school a satisfactory capacity to improve further.

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## Annex A

## Inspection judgements

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

<b>How well do learners achieve?</b>	2
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	3
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>	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	3
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	3
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

<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.

## Annex A

**Leadership and management**

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

30 June 2007

Dear Children

Inspection of Kirkby Stephen Primary School, Cumbria CA17 4AE

Thank you for being so friendly and helpful when we visited your school to find out how well you are doing. There are lots of good things about your school, but we also found a few ways in which it could be even better.

It is clear that, most of the time, you all get on well together, in lessons and at play time. You behaved well whilst we were in school, but your teachers and parents tell us that a few children find it hard to behave well all the time. It is important that everyone behaves well so you get the best from your learning. In all the lessons we saw, you were keen to do your best and you produced some good work. Most of you are making good progress and learning new work quickly. You say there are lots of interesting things to do in lessons, and we agree. The work you are given is making you think hard, but it is usually good fun. The work from your multicultural week, which was in our room, is particularly interesting and you told us how much you had enjoyed it. You know about making healthy choices in the food you eat and the exercise you take. All the staff look after you very well and make sure you are happy and ready to learn.

We would like you to work with your teachers to improve the way you learn.

- You need to improve your work in science. We have asked the school to make sure the work you are given is challenging with plenty of opportunities to explore and investigate scientific ideas.
- We have asked the school to put in place a better system to check on how well you are doing with your work. This will help them to make sure you are making as much progress as possible.
- We want your teachers and the governors to find out exactly how successful your school is in all aspects of its work. This will help them to know what they have to do to make it even better.

Thank you for helping us with the inspection of your school.

Yours sincerely

George Crowther

Lead Inspector