

Skelton School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	112121
Local Authority	Cumbria
Inspection number	310789
Inspection dates	17–18 October 2007
Reporting inspector	David Earley

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	80
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Athole Mckillop
Headteacher	Mr Gary Newman
Date of previous school inspection	1 February 2004
School address	Skelton Penrith Cumbria CA11 9SE
Telephone number	01768 484367
Fax number	0

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

This is a smaller than average sized school serving a rural community. The proportion of pupils who are eligible for free school meals is below average. All pupils are of White British origin. The proportion of pupils who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below average.

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 and improving school. There are some outstanding features. An important element in the success of the school is the very strong leadership of the headteacher. His very clear vision for improving provision and raising standards is shared by staff and governors and this leads to good achievement and personal development.

When children start school in the Reception class their skills and abilities are typical for most children of this age. From these starting points children make good progress so that by the time they enter Year 1 standards are above what is expected for their age. Good achievement and progress are maintained so that by the end of Years 2 and 6, standards are significantly above average.

Pupils' personal development, including spiritual, moral, social, and cultural, development is good. This contributes significantly to good progress. Pupils enjoy coming to school. Their attendance is good and behaviour is excellent. They have an excellent understanding of how to lead a healthy lifestyle and are extremely well prepared for their future secondary education. Pupils have a good understanding of their own local culture and cultures in other societies, but have insufficient awareness of the breadth of cultural diversity of British society. Pupils play an important role within the school and wider community and say that they feel safe and well cared for.

Teaching and learning are good. Lessons are typically lively and interesting because teachers' good subject knowledge enables them to ask challenging questions and give clear explanations. They manage pupils well and ensure that work is appropriately challenging for pupils of different ages and abilities in mixed age classes. The curriculum is good. It is enriched by a good range of visits, visitors and extra-curricular opportunities. The school has made significant improvements to curriculum planning so that it is related to pupils' interests and enables learning to be purposeful and active. However there are insufficient opportunities for pupils to extend their skills in numeracy, and information and communication technology (ICT) by using them in other subjects. Good links with outside agencies help to extend the curriculum.

Care and guidance are excellent. There is an exceptionally strong family atmosphere in this very caring school. A parent commented, 'We are extremely pleased with the values system at Skelton which teaches and reinforces respect, care and consideration of others.' All pupils are very well known and valued and this leads to very high levels of confidence and self-esteem. All pupils, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are well supported and this enables them to make good progress. Child protection, risk assessment procedures and government recommendations for safeguarding children are in place. There are very effective systems for assessing and tracking pupils' progress.

Leadership and management are good. There is a shared drive to raise standards and a determination to provide the best for each pupil. The school evaluates its performance well and this leads to clear strategic planning. Teachers work well together to check teaching and learning in order to make improvements. Governors know the school well and play an important role in helping to shape the direction of the school.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Provision in the Foundation Stage is good and this leads to good progress. Children settle quickly because relationships are very good and this helps them to develop confidence and to work independently. The stimulating curriculum is enhanced by good teaching. For example children extended their counting skills when the teacher organised a treasure hunt which involved the identification of numbers. Teachers know the children well and keep a careful check on their progress so that work is well suited to their abilities. The Foundation Stage is well led and managed and good use is made of the new outside play area to extend learning.

What the school should do to improve further

- Provide more opportunities for pupils to become aware of the diversity of British society.
- Ensure the curriculum enables pupils to extend their skills in mathematics and ICT in other subjects.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Achievement is good. Pupils, whatever their ability or background, make good progress. This is because personal development and teaching and learning are good and the school makes very effective use of assessment and tracking. This leads to significantly above average standards at the end of Year 6.

Children get off to a flying start in the Foundation Stage and by the time they enter Year 1 most exceed the goals set for their learning.

This good progress is continued in Key Stage 1. The results of the assessments in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of Year 2 in 2006 were significantly above average, as they have been for the last five years. Indications are that this was maintained in 2007. Pupils in the current Year 2 continue to make good progress and achieve well and the school expects them to reach above average standards in reading, writing and mathematics.

The results of the 2006 national tests in Year 6 in English, mathematics and science were significantly above average, as they have been for most of the previous five years. During the previous two years progress was not as good as expected as a result of staffing instabilities and high pupil mobility in Key Stage 2. The situation is now resolved; progress is good and pupils achieve well. Indications are that standards in 2007 were above average. The school expects pupils in the current Year 6 to reach above average standards and to exceed their challenging targets.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' personal development and well-being, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. This underpins good academic achievement because pupils have positive attitudes to school. Pupils really enjoy coming to school, behave extremely well and say that they feel safe and well looked after. Attendance is good and pupils have an excellent awareness of how to lead a healthy lifestyle, as evidenced by the school receiving awards of Healthy School status and Activemark. Pupils make a good contribution to the local and wider community. The school council plays an important role in the life of the school and pupils accept responsibility

in many ways, such as working in the school bank or helping with the smooth running of the school. There are links with schools in Tanzania and York, giving pupils experience of other cultures and places. The school is aware of the need to extend awareness of the cultural diversity within British society. There is a strong focus on developing skills in literacy, numeracy and ICT. Pupils are very confident and have high self-esteem and have many opportunities to develop their enterprise skills. Their preparation for their life beyond school is excellent.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are good. This enables pupils to make good progress. Some excellent teaching was seen during the inspection. Lessons are generally interesting and fun so that pupils enjoy their work and want to learn. For example, in the excellent teaching in Year 2 the teacher made use of a puppet and a number game in order to extend pupils' understanding of odd and even numbers. Assessment is used well in order to ensure that work is challenging and well suited to different abilities. Teachers ensure that pupils know what they are expected to learn and check their progress at the end of lessons giving them a good understanding of their learning. Learning is further enhanced because pupils are encouraged to learn independently and to work collaboratively. Teachers and teaching assistants work well together and this helps to ensure continuity and consistency in learning for all pupils.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is good. It is well planned to meet the needs of pupils in mixed age classes. A very effective programme of personal, social and health education gives pupils an excellent understanding of how to lead healthy lifestyles. The curriculum is enriched by a good range of visits, visitors and popular extra-curricular activities which help to extend learning. When pupils make residential visits to outdoor centres or work with theatre groups in school their horizons are widened and learning is deepened. The school is making effective improvements to the curriculum by focusing on the interests of pupils and ensuring that learning is active so that pupils want to learn. However, the school is aware of the need to further extend skills in numeracy and ICT by using them more frequently in other subjects. There are strong links with outside agencies which help to extend the curriculum and this is enhanced by links with other schools in this country and abroad.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Care guidance and support are excellent. This is a very caring school. Because relationships are excellent and there is an extremely strong family atmosphere, pupils increase their confidence and develop high self esteem. This helps to make them very confident learners. Pupils say that they are very happy to approach an adult should they have a problem and the care they show for each other is outstanding. For example, older pupils are very conscientious in helping to look after younger pupils at break and lunchtime and a great deal of care is given to ensure that pupils new to the school are helped to settle in. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are well supported so that they make good progress. Child protection and risk assessment procedures are in place and the school follows government recommendations for

safeguarding children. There is a very effective system for assessing and tracking progress which helps teachers and pupils to know what needs to be done next in order to improve learning.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher provides very strong leadership. This is enhanced by the example he gives through the excellent quality of his own teaching. He shares his clear vision for raising standards and improving provision with staff and governors and this leads to good personal development and good academic achievement. Staff work well together as a team to set challenging targets and there is a shared commitment to provide an extremely caring, inclusive learning community and to improve the curriculum so that it is focused on engaging pupils' interest.

The school carefully evaluates its own performance and this leads to a good development plan. For example, an analysis of weaknesses in writing led to the implementation of strategies which have improved writing. The school has also correctly identified the need to pursue plans to extend the building in order to increase the space available for teaching and learning, particularly in physical education. Subject leaders know their subjects well. In this small school they work very well together to share responsibilities and check teaching and learning in order to make improvements. Parents have positive views of the school and take advantage of opportunities to be involved in its life and work. A parent commented that, 'This is a well managed school that keeps parents/carers well informed about all things relating to school life.' Governance is good. Governors know the school well. They play an active role in supporting the school and in holding it to account for its performance. Issues from the previous inspection have been successfully addressed and the budget is carefully managed to support the raising of standards and to improve provision.

Strong leadership, a clear vision for improvement and thorough evaluation of performance give the school good capacity to improve.

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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
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

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?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	1
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	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?	2
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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	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

19 October 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Skelton School, Cumbria, CA11 9SE

Thank you for making me so welcome when I visited your school. I was really impressed by your courtesy and good manners and by your excellent behaviour. Thank you also for the thoughtful way in which you answered my questions. It was a pleasure to talk to you. You told me that you enjoy coming to school and that adults are helpful if you have a problem. I was pleased to hear that you all feel safe and well cared for and that you know about the importance of a healthy diet and plenty of exercise in keeping healthy and fit. Your school is extremely caring and you look after each other very well.

Here are some of the things your school does well:

- overall it is a good school
- lessons are interesting, you have good teaching and you learn well
- every one is very helpful and you all get on well together
- the school council helps to make things better in school
- the school keeps a good check on how well you are doing
- teachers and governors work hard together to improve the school and help you to do even better.

Here are some of the things I would like the school to do better:

- I would like you to find out more about the different traditions and customs of people who live in this country
- I would like you to make more use of your numeracy and computer skills in other subjects to help you to get even better.

Thank you once again for making me so welcome. I hope the bankers give you lots of interest on your accounts!

Yours sincerely

David Earley

Lead inspector