

Stramongate Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	112188
Local Authority	Cumbria
Inspection number	310805
Inspection dates	31 January –1 February 2008
Reporting inspector	Gillian Salter-Smith

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	397
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr John Dyer
Headteacher	Mr Mike Poole
Date of previous school inspection	1 December 2006
School address	Blackhall Road Kendal Cumbria LA9 4BT
Telephone number	01539 773622
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This is a larger than average primary school. Pupils come from a wide range of socio-economic circumstances. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is well below average. The proportion of pupils identified as having learning difficulties and/or disabilities is broadly average and the number with a statement of special educational need is higher than average. Most pupils are from White British backgrounds. Of the small number from different minority ethnic backgrounds, very few are in the early stages of learning English. The school is recognised as an extended school and is part of the Kendal Community Partnership. A private nursery for 3–4 year olds operates from the school site; before and after school clubs are offered.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

In accordance with section 13 (5) of the Education Act 2005, HMCI is of the opinion that the school no longer requires significant improvement.

Stramongate Primary is a rapidly improving school. Its overall effectiveness is satisfactory. There are good features in its provision and within its leadership and management. Since the last inspection, the determined leadership of the headteacher, well supported by senior colleagues, has ensured that the progress of pupils has improved significantly. At the last inspection, most lessons were satisfactory with a few that were good. Now, around three quarters of lessons are good or better. As a result, pupils are enjoying their lessons much more, trying hard with their work and making good progress. It is the unrelenting focus leaders are placing on pupils' achievement that has galvanised staff, pupils and parents. Leaders set pupils challenging targets for learning and check carefully on progress towards them. This has created a dialogue between class teachers and leaders, firmly based on whether pupils are doing as well as they can. In a small number of lessons, however, there is too much talking by teachers and learning tasks lack sufficient challenge to ensure that all pupils do as well as they can.

At the time of the national tests in 2007, the school was in the early stages of its journey of improvement. Pupils were still catching up on a legacy of underachievement and not all met their targets. Achievement, therefore, is satisfactory. In 2007, the test results for Year 6 were broadly average but inspection evidence shows that they are set to rise. The pupils' progress has accelerated rapidly in the last year because of better teaching and management, and improvements to the curriculum. Although pupils are doing much better in the basic skills of literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT), their achievement is held back by a relative lack of scope to apply their skills across the curriculum.

Most parents are highly supportive of the work of the school. They appreciate the good care, guidance and support their children receive. One comment typifies the view of many parents: 'We send our children to Stramongate School because the staff are committed, very hard working and take great trouble to look after the individual needs of each child.' Within the school's supportive atmosphere, pupils develop into responsible young people who are well prepared for the next stage of their education. Behaviour is good and pupils enjoy school and learning. Pupils know how to keep themselves healthy and many enjoy the extra sporting activities. Pupils feel safe in school and they know that staff will help them if they have any problems. Pupils make a good contribution to their own and the wider community, and they take on responsibilities well. The school's status as an International School helps to develop their understanding of different cultures.

The quality of leadership and management has improved since the last inspection. Senior leaders and key subject leaders are now rigorous in monitoring the school's performance thereby accurately evaluating its strengths and weaknesses. Some subject leaders, however, are not involved enough in taking action to raise standards in their subjects. Considerable improvement has been brought about since the last inspection and the school has a good capacity to improve further.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 3

Children start school in Reception with levels of development that are typical for their age. Most children make satisfactory progress and reach the expectations for their age by the end of the Foundation Stage. Good levels of care and support create a happy and secure environment. Parents say their children settle into school quickly and enjoy learning. The children behave well because the staff have established good routines and give children plenty of praise. Most activities are interesting and enjoyable, such as when children were engrossed in repairing bicycles in the 'garage'. Staff strike a good balance between directing children's learning and encouraging them to make choices. As a result, the children have time to explore things that interest them and develop the independence to be confident learners. Whilst children's progress is carefully assessed and recorded, the activities chosen by each child are not always monitored carefully enough. This can sometimes result in children missing out on important aspects of learning.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve opportunities for pupils to apply their basic skills of literacy, numeracy and ICT across the curriculum.
- Ensure that all lessons include the necessary pace and challenge to enable all pupils to meet their challenging targets.
- Develop the skills of all subject leaders so that they take full responsibility for improving pupils' achievement in their subject.

A small proportion of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Pupils' achievement is satisfactory and standards are broadly average. Pupils make good progress in most lessons. Inspection evidence shows that the rate of progress has increased rapidly over the past year, brought about by improved teaching and a relentless focus on raising achievement for every pupil.

The 2007 national test results for Year 2 pupils were broadly average in reading and writing but below average in mathematics. In 2007, Year 6 national test results were broadly average overall, but below average in science. However, too many pupils did not reach the standards of which they were capable and targets were not met. Inspection findings show that results in the national tests at the end of Year 6 are on course to improve in English, mathematics and science this year. However, many pupils are still catching up on a legacy of underachievement and not all are yet on track to reach their challenging targets.

Girls and boys make similar rates of progress. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those whose first language is not English make good progress because they receive well targeted support.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils thoroughly enjoy school and have positive attitudes to their lessons and learning. One comment typifies the views of most: 'There are lots of different things to do in lessons and the teachers make them fun.' As a result, attendance is good. Pupils of all ages get on well together. Occasionally, behaviour around school can be a little boisterous but it is nearly always good and supports pupils' learning well. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. For example, strong links with schools in other parts of the world enrich pupils' cultural understanding, and they explore moral issues, such as the difference between being proud and boasting. Pupils know how to make healthy choices in the food they eat and the exercise they take, and they explain why these are beneficial. They say school is a safe, friendly place and that the staff help them if they have a problem. Pupils make a good contribution to the school community. All have class jobs and older ones have special responsibilities, such as acting as buddies on the playground. Pupils made a good contribution to the local community when they produced art work that people with visual impairment could appreciate. The good levels of personal skills seen in Year 6 and pupils' improving academic achievement equip them well for the future.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Good teaching and learning contribute to pupils making good progress in most lessons. No inadequate teaching was seen. Supportive relationships and good management of behaviour result in pupils being keen to succeed. Lessons are often lively, and pupils' enthusiasm and enjoyment of learning are evident. Teachers and pupils carry out frequent checks on what has been learned and what needs to be improved. Pupils find this very helpful, especially when they review their own work and that of classmates. As a result of a focus on improving presentation, pupils are rightly proud of their handwriting and neat work.

Rigorous assessment enables teachers to set work that matches pupils' different needs and set challenging targets for learning. Pupils find their targets are an essential feature that motivates them to learn because they gain great satisfaction from reaching their goals. Teachers' marking is thorough. Pupils enjoy responding to teachers' comments and improving their work as a result. Constructive support from teaching assistants allows pupils, especially those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, to make good progress. In a small number of lessons, the pace and challenge of learning wane sometimes because the teacher talks for too long or the tasks are not demanding enough.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

Concerns raised at the previous inspection have been tackled successfully. Pupils now spend the recommended amount of time in lessons and a consistent amount of teaching time is devoted to the core subjects of English, mathematics and science. Overall, the curriculum meets pupils' needs. The curriculum for basic skills of literacy, numeracy and ICT is well planned and has led to good progress. The school recognises that an important step to improve achievement

is to provide many more opportunities for pupils to apply and extend their basic skills to new and challenging circumstances across the curriculum.

Assemblies and a well planned programme of personal, social and emotional development contribute to pupils' good personal development. Visits to places of interest, visitors to the school and links with the local community enrich the curriculum and add to pupils' enjoyment of learning. Pupils benefit from a satisfactory range of extra-curricular activities including a variety of sports.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Academic guidance has improved significantly since the last inspection. A culture of target-setting is boosting pupils' achievement because they enjoy meeting the challenge of reaching their goals. A typical comment was: 'When we meet our targets, we are really proud.' The school checks pupils' progress frequently, so staff can spot pupils who are falling behind and take rapid action to support them. This is being successful in ensuring that the great majority of pupils are on track to meet their targets. Pupils who have learning difficulties are identified early, given specific support and make good progress. Good pastoral care is based on staff knowing their pupils well and working hard to ensure that each child is cared for, happy and ready to learn. An early warning system is a good way of identifying pupils who may be vulnerable and, when needed, the school has strong links with outside agencies to seek additional support. The school provides a safe environment where the required safeguarding procedures are in place.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management, including governance, are good. Much has been achieved since the last inspection. The headteacher, well supported by a strengthened senior team, is strongly focused on raising achievement and there is shared commitment to improvement amongst the staff and governors.

Rigorous assessment and tracking of pupils' progress have helped raise pupils' aspirations and expectations of achievement by teachers and governors. Scrupulous monitoring of work in lessons by senior and key subject leaders supports the school's realistic self-evaluation. Not all middle leaders have yet developed the skills to fully contribute to school improvement. Staff have responded well to the support of the local authority and good quality professional development has helped to improve the quality of teaching. As a result, pupils' progress is accelerating rapidly and the quality of teaching is now good. The school improvement plan provides a very clear way forward.

Governors are increasingly providing the level of support and challenge required to ensure that the school moves forward. The budget is well balanced and the school provides satisfactory value for money.

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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?	3
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	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards ¹ 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

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	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	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?	3
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 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	3
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

4 February 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Stramongate Primary School, Cumbria, LA9 4BT

Many thanks to all of you for welcoming the inspection team into your school. We enjoyed seeing you at work in lessons and it was a pleasure to talk to so many of you about your school. It is important that you know what we found out and what we have reported to your parents or carers.

Your school is improving all the time and is now giving you a satisfactory education. You are well taught and most of you are making good progress in lessons. You enjoy learning and it was good to hear how many of you like having a clear target to aim towards in literacy and numeracy. Your good behaviour and regular attendance help you to make good progress.

The headteacher, leaders and staff have worked very hard to make your school a better place to learn. Many of you recognise how you are now working differently, for example, doing harder work and taking more care with how you present your work. The improvements the school has made are helping many of you to make more rapid progress. Some of you have not quite reached the standards of which you are capable but you are catching up very quickly.

To help you catch up completely, we have suggested that some improvements are made. One is to make sure that in all lessons you are given the chance to do as well as you can. Another is that you have more chances to use your skills of reading, writing, mathematics and ICT in subjects across the curriculum. Finally, we have asked that all subjects are looked at and improved where necessary.

You can help by continuing to enjoy your lessons, taking your targets seriously and doing your best to make improvements to your work.

I do hope that you enjoy the rest of your time at Stramongate Primary School. I wish you well for your futures.

Yours sincerely

Gillian Salter-Smith

Lead Inspector