

Kirkoswald C of E School

Inspection report

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| Unique Reference Number | 112253 |
| Local Authority | Cumbria |
| Inspection number | 310828 |
| Inspection dates | 3–4 October 2007 |
| Reporting inspector | Sheila Mawer |

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

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|-------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------|
| Type of school | Primary |
| School category | Voluntary controlled |
| Age range of pupils | 4–11 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number on roll | |
| School | 84 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair | Mr Paul Telford |
| Headteacher | Mrs Greta Ellis |
| Date of previous school inspection | 1 March 2003 |
| School address | Kirkoswald Penrith Cumbria CA10 1EN |
| Telephone number | 01768 898461 |
| Fax number | 01768 898461 |

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|--------------------------|------------------|
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

This very small school is situated in a rural part of the county. It takes pupils from the local village and surrounding areas. Pupils are taught in three mixed-age classes. Most pupils are White British. Socio-economic conditions are comparatively advantageous and the proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is well below average. Although the percentage of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below average, the proportion with statements of special educational needs is well above average. The headteacher has been in post for a year ending a period of instability in leadership and management. There is no school hall or playing fields.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a good school. It has some outstanding features and parents hold the school in high esteem. They are justifiably proud of the enormous strides their children make in their excellent personal development. A few parents summed up the views of many when writing, 'It was like winning the lottery when my child was accepted at the school. I couldn't wish for a better school. It is an exceptionally happy and supportive place to be'. This is a very caring school and the welfare of pupils is central to its work. Consequently, pupils are extremely happy learners. Pupils have a strong desire to stay fit and healthy. In spite of limited playground space, the school has achieved the award of Activemark for sporting achievements. The school council is skilled at encouraging pupils to eat healthy snacks at break times. Pupils make an excellent contribution to the wider community and worked successfully on a local recycling scheme. They also support different charities. During the inspection, the school council organised different activities for 'Water Aid'. The skills they learn in becoming responsible citizens are preparing them very well for their life ahead.

Teaching is good and lessons are made exciting through interesting topics and many visits and visitors. The good curriculum achieves its aim of being 'a living reflection of the world around us' and considerably enriches the teaching and learning. Achievement is good and pupils reach above average standards. Science and reading are strengths of the school and more able pupils do particularly well in these areas through very effective teaching and learning. The school recognises that more able pupils are not making as much progress in writing and mathematics and their standards are not high enough. While great attention is given to pupils' care and safety, the academic guidance they receive is still developing, with marking and target setting being areas for further development.

The leadership and management of the school are good, with a clear focus on improvements after a long period without a permanent headteacher. The new headteacher is well respected by parents, staff, governors and pupils and has involved them all in the school improvement plan. New roles are being allocated to staff and governors have a clearly defined structure in which to monitor and evaluate the work of the school. The removal of the school from a deficit budget means the school can now move forward, build on its achievements and address its weaknesses. Consequently, the school has a good capacity to improve and strengthen its effectiveness further.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

The Foundation Stage is successful in meeting the needs of all children and is well led and managed. Children make good progress and many exceed the goals expected of them by the start of Year 1. Teaching is good and an effective team of staff provides challenging activities that move the children on well in their learning. Progress in reading is exceptionally good and opportunities to learn through investigations impact very positively on children's scientific skills as they move through the school. The curriculum is good. In spite of very restricted accommodation, both inside and outdoors, a good range of activities are planned across all areas of learning, with a good focus on gaining independence and learning through play.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure consistency in planning more challenging work for more able pupils, particularly in writing and mathematics.
- Improve target setting and marking of pupils' work so that pupils know how well they are doing and how they can improve.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils achieve well, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. By Year 6, the results of national tests show pupils reach above average standards. These standards have been maintained over recent times and in some years results have been significantly above average. For example, in 2007, nearly all of the pupils in Year 6 reached above the level expected for their age in the science and reading national tests. Children start school with ability that is typical for their age. They make good progress and by the end of Foundation Stage the majority reach the level expected for their age and many are exceeding this level. Good progress in Key Stages 1 and 2 leads to pupils in Year 6 exceeding the level expected for their age. Teachers' assessments show standards by Year 2 are above average although not as high in writing and mathematics as in reading and science. In Key Stage 2, progress is very good, especially for more able pupils. Standards are also above average in writing and mathematics but are not as high as in reading and science.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

- Pupils' outstanding personal development contributes significantly to their good achievement and the welcoming ethos that pervades the school. They love school and attendance is high. Their views sum up their enjoyment. 'It's fun here. There's so much to enjoy because teachers plan exciting work'. Pupils' impeccable behaviour is an improvement since the last inspection. Pupils' involvement in drawing up behaviour guidelines has given them a clearer understanding about expectations for their own conduct. Their involvement in drawing up behaviour guidelines makes pupils clear about the expectations in their conduct. The school has achieved healthy schools status and pupils know how to live healthy lives. The active school council successfully runs games sessions at lunch times, keeping pupils fit and working positively together. School meals are a good example of how well older pupils support younger children by serving their meals and promoting the healthy options that are available.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is impressive. Spiritual development is promoted exceptionally well through wide opportunities for pupils to learn outside of the classroom. Whether using a camera in the bird hide to observe a nest, searching for natural objects for clay designs, or examining a Viking Longboat, pupils' appreciation of the world is significantly enriched. Relationships are outstanding with clear evidence of care and respect. Pupils have very close links with the village and local churches. They also have a good awareness of the wider world through their association with schools in Sierra Leone. Good levels of achievement in the basic skills prepare pupils extremely well for their life ahead.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are good and pupils achieve well. Teaching is well planned and subjects are often linked together. This helps to motivate pupils and enrich their learning. Teaching assistants are used well to support pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Activities are well matched to their needs and practical tasks keep them engaged and learning well. Information and communication technology is used successfully to explain new aspects of learning, such as finding the perimeter of irregular shapes in Years 5 and 6. The strong focus on teaching phonics and learning about the world in the Reception class gives children a flying start in reading and science. Confident and skilled teaching continues particularly in reading and science through the rest of the school. Questions and answers about the Vikings, during a paired reading session, challenged all groups of pupils in Years 2 and 3, and especially the more able. Occasionally this challenge for the more able is less evident especially in the teaching of writing and mathematics. In writing, pupils are given many opportunities to write for different purposes. While more able pupils do this extremely well, there is less emphasis on helping them improve their handwriting, spelling or punctuation. Pupils are not reaching the higher standards of which they are capable because these important skills are not taught regularly enough. In mathematics, more rigour is needed in some lessons for the more able pupils to make greater progress. The work in the independent tasks is not always hard enough or matched accurately to their needs. Pupils' work is regularly marked but comments do not always tell pupils how to make their work better.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

Rich and relevant experiences are provided for all pupils to learn outside of the classroom. This is a significant factor in pupils' enjoyment for learning and good achievement. The good curriculum is broad and balanced. It focuses well on the basic skills and is enriched through partnerships with different providers. The school, for example, works closely with neighbouring schools to extend sporting opportunities. Specialist coaches are used to improve pupils' skills so that standards in physical education are above average. An out of school club provides a wide range of activities before and after school. These attract many pupils and add considerable enjoyment to school life. The curriculum is well planned, adapted for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and fully meets their needs. The exciting opportunities that are offered quickly engage pupils who are potentially disaffected. More able pupils and those who are gifted and talented also benefit from all that the curriculum offers. Further initiatives are needed in writing and mathematics to ensure pupils' progress is as good as that in science and reading. The accommodation is very restricted outside and there is no school hall. The school's success in promoting outstanding personal development enables it to cope particularly well in these difficult circumstances.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Pastoral care for all pupils is outstanding. Pupils thrive because this is a very caring school where they receive high levels of encouragement to meet their personal needs. Adults know every pupil well and there is a strong sense of security. Personal guidance receives a high profile

in the effective arrangements that are made through the personal, health and social education programme. All procedures to ensure pupils' safety and well-being are in place.

Academic guidance is satisfactory. The school has made great strides in improving the tracking of pupils' progress. Pupils who need extra support are now identified more quickly. Learning targets have been set recently in writing and mathematics. These are not yet embedded in practice. While some pupils know their targets, they are not involved enough in setting and reviewing them. As a result, pupils are not clear about how well they are doing or how to improve.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

After a period of instability, the new headteacher has strengthened the leadership and management and quickly fostered a culture of strong teamwork and clear educational direction. Improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory. Frequent changes in leadership and management slowed the progress in making improvements until recently. The tracking of pupils' progress has now been addressed successfully, good achievement has been sustained and personal development has improved. Through decisive leadership, the headteacher is steadily narrowing the gap between how well more able pupils do in different subjects, although there is still more to do. Challenging targets set in 2007 were achieved, except for writing at the above average standards. The management skills of other staff are developing so that more monitoring can be delegated. The school improvement plan is based securely on an accurate self-evaluation of the school's strengths and weaknesses. Developments are given appropriate priority and closely matched to developing every aspect of the pupils' development.

Governance is good. Governors have a good understanding of their roles and play a major part in evaluating the school's performance and leading its development. With excellent support from the school's administrator they have brought the school out of a deficit budget. This has been achieved through prudent budgeting and good management. The governors, in a much stronger financial situation, are now making plans to improve the accommodation that requires refurbishment. Parents are very supportive of the school and have raised considerable sums of money to benefit its development. In its present position, the school gives good value for money.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

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| 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

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| 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

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|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---|
| 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

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|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---|
| 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 extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles | 2 |
| The extent to which learners adopt safe practices | 1 |
| How well learners enjoy their education | 1 |
| The attendance of learners | 1 |
| The behaviour of learners | 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? | 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.

Annex A

Leadership and management

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| 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

5 October 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Kirkoswald C of E School, Cumbria, CA10 1EN

Thank you for the very warm welcome you gave to me when I recently visited you at school. I enjoyed talking to you all over the two days and was particularly grateful for the information that the school council gave me about life at Kirkoswald School and what makes it special. I agree with you all, your parents, the staff and governors that the school that you go to a good school. Your school has several strengths. One of the most important is how much you all enjoy school, and are always ready to help each other and take on extra responsibilities. I know too how much you appreciate the outstanding support you receive from the staff.

Here are other things that are good about your school.

- You do well in your work because you are well taught and the learning is fun.
- The exciting curriculum that gives you so many opportunities for visits and to learn through topics, such as the Vikings.
- The good opportunities you are given to keep healthy and fit.
- How good you all are in considering people not as fortunate as yourselves in your fund raising work.
- You all do particularly well in science and reading and this is a strength of the school.
- How well your headteacher, staff and governors are leading the school.

I have suggested a couple of things that could be improved. Some of you could do harder work in mathematics and improve your punctuation, spelling and handwriting in your writing. I also found that some of you don't know your targets in writing and mathematics. I would like you to be more involved in your targets and to have more information about how well you are doing in your work and how to improve. You can do your bit by always trying hard and taking a pride in your work and making sure that spellings and punctuation are correct.

With best wishes for your future success.

Yours sincerely

Sheila Mawer

Lead inspector