

St George's Church of England School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	112289
Local Authority	Cumbria
Inspection number	310839
Inspection dates	6–7 December 2007
Reporting inspector	Joan Elton

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	187
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Rev Jane Natrass
Headteacher	Mrs Elaine Kent
Date of previous school inspection	1 September 2003
School address	Salthouse Road Barrow-in-Furness Cumbria LA14 2DX
Telephone number	01229 894612
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Age group	3–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

St George's Church of England Primary is an average sized primary school, which serves an area of considerable social disadvantage. A high proportion of pupils are eligible for free school meals. Pupils' attainment, when they start school, is much lower than is typical for their ages. The proportion with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is well above average. Almost all the pupils are from White British backgrounds. Of those from minority ethnic heritages, only a few are at the early stages of learning English. The school provides a wide range of extra services to support the local community. It has Activemark, Artsmark Silver and Healthy Schools awards, as well as a local authority award for good practice in the Foundation Stage.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

St George's is a good school with a number of outstanding features. It is held in very high regard by its parents who feel 'its dedicated headteacher and staff strive to do their best for the pupils'. Since its last inspection, pupils' achievement has improved significantly. Many pupils have to overcome difficulties in their lives, but exceptionally high levels of care, combined with good teaching, support learning effectively. The staff create a very positive environment for learning, which ensures pupils make good progress in their academic and personal development. The headteacher's strong leadership is keenly focused on raising standards and the school will not accept second best from, or for, its pupils.

Often from very low starting points, pupils make good progress and achieve well. Standards in reading throughout the school are lower than in other subjects, but by Year 6, standards are broadly average. This is reflected in national test results, which have been improving steadily over the last three years. In 2007, English and science at Key Stage 2 were similar to national averages, with mathematics lower. Pupils of all abilities and from all backgrounds make similar progress because the school takes great care to match teaching and the curriculum to pupils' needs.

Pupils' personal development is outstanding. The warm and friendly nature of the school community nurtures pupils' personal skills and they respond admirably to the staff's high expectations of effort, participation and behaviour. The pupils enjoy all aspects of school life, particularly the wide range of interesting activities both in the classroom and in the school grounds. Pupils' behaviour is good. They know a lot about being healthy, and they feel safe and cared for. Lots of extra responsibilities, particularly for the older pupils, make a significant contribution to the school community. Pupils are also involved in the wider community, for example singing at a local old people's home. Good levels of personal skills and improving academic standards prepare pupils well for the future. A good curriculum, with some very strong features, promotes pupils' enjoyment well through interesting lessons and a rich range of clubs, visits and visitors. Outstanding levels of care, guidance and support encourage and enhance pupils' success at school.

Leadership is good, with high aspirations for the pupils, whilst recognising that many need considerable support to do their best. The headteacher promotes a very clear view of the school's values and leads from the front in seeking the best possible education for the pupils. The school's self-evaluation is accurate and the leadership team of staff and governors has effectively addressed all issues identified at the time of the last inspection. The school has a good capacity for further improvement and provides good value for money.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children in the Foundation Stage enjoy their learning and achieve well. High standards of care, with close attention to the welfare of the individual child, create a happy and secure environment in which children thrive. Children behave well because of high expectations, well established routines and plenty of praise and encouragement. Activities are interesting and enjoyable, such as when Nursery children explored what might be inside a wrapped present. There is a good balance between teacher led and child chosen activities. As a result, the children have time to explore and develop their independence. Staff support learning well and enrich children's

experiences. They closely track children's progress through observation and use this information well to plan for future needs. 'Learning stories' capture moments when children grasp new skills and are much enjoyed by parents. The school's data and lesson observations show that children make good progress and many achieve nationally agreed Early Learning Goals. However, because a large number of children begin school with weak skills, by the end of Reception their development is still below that expected for their age, particularly in reading and writing.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards in reading across the school.
- Improve standards in mathematics in Key Stage 2.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils' current work and the school's data show that standards are broadly average by Year 6 and achievement is good. After starting Nursery with skills well below the level of development typical for this age group, children make good progress due to good teaching and an interesting range of learning activities. However, many enter Year 1 with skills below those expected for their age, particularly in aspects of literacy.

Pupils make good progress during Key Stage 1, but by the end of Year 2 standards are still below national averages. In the 2006 National Tests, standards were just below average. They fell in 2007, partly because of new pupils arriving and others leaving. Nevertheless, writing was higher than reading because of successful teaching and learning strategies. In Key Stage 2, good progress continues. By Year 6, pupils' current work is broadly in line with national averages. This is reflected in the 2005 to 2007 National Tests, the exception being the 2007 mathematics results, which dropped, with a small number of children not quite reaching the higher level.

The school has introduced a number of initiatives to improve standards in reading and mathematics. These are beginning to show success but need further refinement to affect overall standards. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, and pupils for whom English is an additional language, achieve as well as their peers because of the school's very successful policies for meeting the needs of all pupils.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils' personal development and well-being are outstanding. Pupils behave well and have very positive attitudes to their learning as their good attendance demonstrates. Nearly all pupils love school. They appreciate the extra help teachers give them, not only in their work but to keep them healthy, safe and happy. As a result they know the importance of exercise, well balanced meals and the need to drink water regularly. They also appreciate that 'stranger danger' can apply to the Internet. Pupils enjoy having responsibilities both in class and about the school and take these most seriously. Site management, sorting items for recycling, and leading others in play are particularly popular jobs. Pupils express their opinions confidently because they know they are listened to. The school council has represented their views very well and well received changes have resulted. Pupils are very courteous and welcoming to visitors. They respect people, property and premises. They encourage each other to join in games; they enjoy raising money for charity and entertaining senior citizens; they treat school equipment with care and are proud of the school's achievements. Spiritual, moral, social and

cultural development is outstanding. The school's Christian values, nurtured through links with the local church, are a significant source of pupils' spiritual awareness.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The quality of teaching and learning is good. The highly skilled and committed staff work well as a team, monitoring each other's work and sharing ideas. As a result there is consistency across the school in a number of outstanding aspects. These include the brisk pace of lessons, teachers' high expectations, the accurate match of work to ability and the effective use of questioning to elicit extended answers. Consequently pupils are highly motivated and strive to contribute well. The support given by teaching assistants to pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is excellent. They explain clearly, restate questions and keep concentration sustained. In all classrooms relationships between pupils and adults are very good. Staff raise pupils' esteem by much praise and encouragement. They also build on previous learning and devise interesting activities to capture pupils' interest. Very occasionally during final sessions, teachers fail to check pupils' readiness to listen and this leads to loss of pace. Teachers support their pupils very well through constructive marking so that pupils know how to improve their work.

Most pupils have limited opportunities for development of their skills in reading and mathematics out of school. To compensate for this, the school recognises the need to raise standards in mathematics and reading. It has introduced a number of initiatives to improve pupils' opportunities in these basic skills, this but there is scope for extension.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

A good range of activities and experiences, both in and outside lessons, meets the needs of all pupils successfully. The school is particularly adept at providing interesting and appropriate activities for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. One-to-one sessions in the 'Snug' with the learning mentor give pupils the confidence to continue in class. The school gives priority to English and mathematics and this has helped to raise standards. In addition, teachers develop key skills through other subjects. In a Year 6 history lesson, pupils use their writing skills effectively to describe the life of a child worker in Victorian times. Pupils develop their computer skills steadily in all areas of the curriculum. Their outstanding personal development owes much to a well structured programme of personal and social education, both in lessons and as part of the daily life of the school. The range of after-school clubs is outstanding and the imaginative development of the school grounds enhances classroom learning.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Staff work very hard to ensure that every child is happy, safe and achieving. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are very well supported and their progress is checked carefully. Vulnerable pupils receive excellent help from the learning mentor and other support workers whilst the induction mentor helps new pupils settle most effectively. Positive relationships underpin these very high standards of care. Pupils and parents are very comfortable approaching

school staff when they need help. They are confident they will be listened to and fairly treated. The school provides a very secure environment where all required safeguarding procedures are in place. It has excellent links with outside agencies. These provide additional pupil support. Academic guidance is very good, because the school tracks pupils' progress very effectively and takes appropriate action to ensure improvement. Pupils understand their learning targets and are motivated to achieve them. Teachers' marking provides plenty of praise and clearly indicates to pupils how they can improve.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good. The excellent and inspirational leadership of the headteacher provides a clear and very caring vision for the school. She is highly committed to raising aspirations and standards, and to developing the whole child. She communicates this vision very effectively to her staff, motivating and developing them so that they are successful in their work – all staff work effectively as a team, sharing ideas and expertise. The senior management team have clearly defined roles and are highly supportive of the headteacher. Together they ensure that every aspect of school life is efficiently organised. The school works in excellent partnership with the local authority, the church, Barrow Excellence Cluster of schools and others to improve educational provision.

Although there are a number of vacancies on the governing body, overall governance is good. Governors share the same vision as the staff leadership team. They know the school well, and recognise its strengths and areas for development. They are confident the staff will meet the challenge of raising standards in reading and mathematics and are keen to develop their own understanding of data so that they can more effectively support the school. Governors frequently challenge the staff leadership team to ensure decisions are as fully informed as possible. Many governors visit the school to work in classrooms, to shadow subject leaders and to assist with learning. These governors contribute to the monitoring process by providing first-hand information. The leadership team of staff and governors have successfully raised the effectiveness of the school over a number of years. As a result the school's reputation has risen in the locality and the number of pupils on role is growing.

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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?	1
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	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?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	2
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	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?	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

8 December 2007

Dear Pupils

St George's Church of England Primary School, Barrow, LA14 2DX

Thank you for being so friendly and helpful when we visited your school to find out how well you are doing. St George's is a good school with some outstanding features, but we also found two ways in which it could be even better.

When we visited lessons, or when we were walking around school, everyone was very keen to tell us what they enjoy doing. It seems you like almost everything about school and particularly the clubs and activities outside lessons. You behaved well whilst we were in school, but your teachers 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. You all get on very well together and the older pupils said this is one of the best things about your school. From visiting some of your lessons, it is clear you are making good progress. The teaching is good and the activities are fun. You have targets to improve your work and you are using these well to help you get better. You say there are lots of interesting activities at school, and we agree. The Planet Protectors and the Site Team are doing a good job and enjoying their work. The older pupils have a good understanding of being healthy and staying safe. The jobs you do around school help you to make an outstanding contribution to your community. All staff look after you exceptionally well and make sure you are happy and ready to learn. Your headteacher and staff are doing a good job in helping your school to get better.

We have asked your school to do these things to improve your learning.

- Everyone in school has been working hard to improve their reading and we want you to carry on with the good work.
- The older children's standards in mathematics are not as high as they could be so we want you to try hard to improve them by learning your number bonds and tables.

You can help by finding opportunities to practice your reading and your tables at home. Thank you for helping us.

Yours sincerely

Mrs Joan Elton

Lead inspector