

Leven Valley CofE Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	112356
Local Authority	Cumbria
Inspection number	310865
Inspection dates	30–31 January 2008
Reporting inspector	Brian Dower

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	70
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Steve Lawler
Headteacher	Mr Ian Nicol
Date of previous school inspection	1 October 2003
School address	Backbarrow Ulverston Cumbria LA12 8QF
Telephone number	01539 531365
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Age group	4–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

This small school serves a number of hamlets and small villages. There are no extremes of affluence or deprivation in the area. All pupils are of White British background. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is well below average. The incidence of learning difficulties and/or disabilities among pupils is average. A new headteacher was appointed in September 2007.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

The quality of education the school provides is satisfactory. Standards are average at the end of Year 2 and Year 6 and pupils' achievement is satisfactory. This is the way governors, headteacher and staff see their school. They are appreciative of the overwhelming support of parents and the confidence they have in the school but are determined to raise standards and quicken the rate of progress.

The school's very caring ethos guides its work and provides the framework for pupils to make good progress in their personal development. Pupils enjoy school, are happy and feel secure. They get on well together and respect their teachers and the assistants. Pupils take some responsibility for younger children during play and lunch breaks, and are strongly involved in their local and church communities. Behaviour is good and attendance is above average, all of which aids pupils' learning. Pupils feel their views are heard through the school council.

The curriculum is good and, for a school of this size, there is a range of well attended activities outside the classroom to broaden pupils' understanding of work done in lessons and to help them develop socially. Good links with other schools further promote pupils' skills and knowledge, as well as their understanding of the world around them.

Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Pupils are keen to learn, they collaborate well in group activities and most can work independently and find out things for themselves. They like it when they are asked difficult questions, have to think hard and talk about their work. They are animated and articulate when explaining, for example, how they can solve mathematical problems. Teaching is most effective when it provides opportunities for pupils to learn in this way and demonstrate their independence. There are, however, inconsistencies in the quality of teaching, particularly in the extent to which marking helps pupils to improve their work, the use of challenging learning targets to raise standards and the match of tasks to the needs of the higher attainers. These are the reasons why achievement is satisfactory and not yet good.

The personal qualities and learning needs of each pupil are known and pupils receive good care and support from every member of staff. It is only recently, however, that appropriate systems have been put in place to track pupils' progress and intervene quickly when weaknesses are uncovered in their work. These systems have yet to demonstrate their effectiveness. The leadership, management and governance of the school are satisfactory. Parents have expressed their confidence in the school's future. All accept that standards need to rise, particularly for the most able pupils, and teachers and governors are working hard to ensure that recent changes bring this about.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 3

The leadership and management are satisfactory. As a result, the quality of teaching and learning, and the curriculum, are also satisfactory. Children settle quickly into the Reception year because of the welcoming atmosphere and the caring, supportive approach by the teacher and learning assistant. From broadly typical starting points, progress is satisfactory and by the time children move on to Year 1 they have the knowledge and skills expected of children of that age. Significant recent improvements have been made in the range of classroom learning activities. The school rightly has as a priority for improvement the replication of such provision for outside play and exploration. Currently, the children's outside play is limited by poor

equipment and resources that are difficult to organise and manage. As a result, there are lost opportunities for children to explore and find out things for themselves.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise achievement by ensuring that learning targets and work in lessons are challenging and enable all pupils, especially the most able, to achieve well.
- Ensure that teachers' marking gives more precise guidance to pupils on how to improve their work.
- Develop outdoor provision for the youngest children.
- Use information from the assessment and tracking systems to identify and address weaknesses identified in pupils' learning more rapidly.

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

Each year the number of pupils assessed or entered for the school's national tests is very small and therefore results must be treated with caution. Trends over time are a more reliable indicator of how well pupils are doing and these show that standards are average and achievement is satisfactory. Standards at the end of Year 2 have been average in recent years, although results in reading, writing and mathematics were above average in 2007. This was because this very small group of pupils had higher levels of ability on entry than is usual for this school and fewer children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Achievement in 2007 was satisfactory for all groups of pupils. The standards reached by pupils at the end of Year 6 in English, mathematics and science are average. The proportion of pupils gaining the expected Level 4 and the higher Level 5 varies from year to year. Overall, the proportion working at the higher level is lower than found nationally because there is insufficient challenge for pupils capable of learning very quickly.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' personal development and well-being, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, are good. This is because they are confident young people who get on well together and have a clear understanding of right and wrong. Behaviour is good. The school's Christian values are at the heart of the care they show for each other and for those less fortunate than themselves. They enjoy their work and attendance is above average. Pupils say they feel safe and secure in school and that there is no bullying. They know how to stay fit and well. They eat healthily in school and take plenty of exercise. The opportunities to take on responsibility are eagerly seized and older pupils are successful mentors and buddies to the younger children. The school council is active in representing pupils' views but has yet to be instrumental in securing improvements in provision, apart from persuading the school to buy additional playtime equipment. Fundraising activities and links with the church ensure that pupils play a strong part in community life. Pupils have good personal qualities and sound basic skills to make the most of the next stage of their education.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

The school evaluates the quality of teaching and learning as good but inspection evidence found them satisfactory. This is because, although good practice exists, it is not widespread. There is variation in the quality of teaching, for example, in the marking of pupils' books, in how well learning targets are used to raise standards and in the challenge for the higher attainers. Teachers have good subject knowledge and they mostly plan appropriate learning activities for the mixed age and mixed ability classes. Teachers are supportive and encouraging in their approach and manage their classes well. They ensure, for example, that rewards and praise are used judiciously to acknowledge effort and progress. There is good use of information and communication technology including interactive whiteboards for teaching and learning. Questioning to check understanding is searching and pupils enjoy the challenge when called upon to talk about their work. Pupils are keen to learn, work well collaboratively and most have the ability to work independently for extended periods of time. There is good use of homework to extend pupils' understanding of what they have done in lessons.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

Curriculum provision is good. It is broad and appropriately balanced in terms of the time given to developing pupils' basic skills and other subjects. However, there are at times too few opportunities for pupils to use their developing skills in writing in other subjects. Good use is made of links with other schools to improve pupils' learning opportunities, such as through consortium music and art projects. A recent initiative is the involvement of the local high school in providing specialist tuition in mathematics to challenge the most able pupils in Years 5 and 6. Educational and residential visits develop pupils' awareness of their own and other people's cultures and give them the opportunity to be increasingly self-reliant. Pupils talk enthusiastically about the after-school clubs and sporting activities which most attend.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

This aspect of the school's provision is satisfactory. The care afforded to pupils and the support they receive are good but systems to track pupils' progress and intervene quickly when weaknesses are uncovered have only recently been reviewed and improved. There has not been sufficient time to demonstrate their effectiveness. Parents are appreciative of all that the school does to make their children feel valued. They like the small, family atmosphere and they welcome that their children are known as individuals by all the staff. Arrangements for health and safety, including child protection, are in place and regularly updated. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make satisfactory progress because of the effectiveness of the support they receive. When pupils have worries they say that there is always an adult they can confide in and they are confident they will be listened to and helped.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Leadership and management, including governance, are satisfactory. The governors and headteacher know their school well and rightly have the raising of standards as the priority for improvement. They are not complacent and look upon pupils' satisfactory progress and average standards as a challenge to do better. The headteacher is putting in place structures to bring this about, including better use of performance targets and assessments to measure and improve the rate of pupils' progress. Such structures have yet to demonstrate their effectiveness. The headteacher is well supported by committed and able colleagues who work to ensure equality of opportunity for every child. Satisfactory progress has been made recently in addressing the issues for improvement from the previous inspection. The school's capacity for further improvement is satisfactory.

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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	3

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	3
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	3

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	3

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	3
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?	3

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?	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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3
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	3
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

Age group

4–11

Inspection date(s)

30–31 January 2008

Inspection number

310865

Letter to pupils explaining the findings of

11st inspection.

1 February 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Leven Valley Church of England Primary School, Cumbria, LA12 8QF

Thank you for welcoming me to your school and talking to me about your work and the interesting things you do in lessons and in the after-school clubs. I was very interested in what the members of the school council had to tell me. I enjoyed listening to some of you solving mathematical problems but I went away from that meeting knowing that I could never be as accurate and quick as you.

You all work hard and get on well together. You tell me that you feel safe in your school and that there is always someone to turn to if you have worries. You know about the importance of leading a healthy lifestyle and balancing rest and play with work. Every pupil in school is known well by every adult and the work in the mixed-age classes is made as interesting as possible. Your teachers and the assistants are working to ensure that the standard of your work gets even better and I know that you will play your part by continuing to try your best in lessons.

Yours is a satisfactory school. The way you are developing as sensible and responsible young people is impressive and you are confident and articulate when talking about your education. By the end of Year 6 you reach the standards expected of pupils entering secondary school. Few of you exceed those standards and the school is working hard to enable more of you to do so. The school now has a system to spot any learning difficulties you have and give you extra help and guidance to overcome them.

A lot has been done to improve the classroom for the youngest children and the school plans to make the outside area better. You will then be able to do more to explore and play together in the open air.

I enjoyed my visit and only wish I had had more time to see all the exciting things you are doing. My best wishes to you and the staff.

Brian Dower

Lead inspector