

Settlebeck High School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	112380
Local Authority	Cumbria
Inspection number	310872
Inspection date	4 October 2007
Reporting inspector	Garry Jones HMI

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	200
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Stuart Manger
Headteacher	Dr Judith Greene
Date of previous school inspection	1 March 2004
School address	Long Lane Sedbergh Cumbria LA10 5AL
Telephone number	01539 620383
Fax number	01539 621024

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors.

The inspector evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues: the personal development and well being of the students, the effectiveness of academic guidance and the use of assessment to raise standards. Evidence was gathered from data, observations in lessons and around the school, the review of samples of students' work and discussions with students, senior staff and the chair of governors. Other aspects of the schools' work were not investigated in detail, but the inspector found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments as given in its self-evaluation were not justified, and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

Description of the school

This is a small school serving the market town of Sedbergh and the surrounding rural area and villages. The school population is almost universally White British. The proportion of students entitled to free school meals is low, but the social and economic characteristics of the area include elements of rural disadvantage and isolation. The proportion of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is in line with that found nationally. However, the proportion of students with a statement of special educational needs is double the national average. A centre for students with autistic spectrum disorders is part of the school. The school is a specialist college for technology, as part of a collaborative with eight other small rural schools known as the rural academy of Cumbria. It is also a member of the South Lakes Federation which collaborates to provide vocational education. The school has Investors In People status. A new head teacher has been in post for four weeks.

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 school. It provides a caring and inclusive environment in which students are able to flourish. The overwhelming majority of parents who responded to the inspection questionnaire were positive in their views of all aspects of the school and students share these sentiments.

Behaviour in lessons and around the school is good. In the narrow corridors and stairwells sensible behaviour reflects very good attitudes to safety. Students confirmed that incidents of bullying were rare. Students enjoy school and attend regularly. They say that this is a healthy school with a focus on healthy lifestyles and are pleased with the improvement to the canteen facilities and menu. Students enthusiastically take part in physical education (PE) and the many sporting activities offered in the school and wider community. The social, moral, spiritual and cultural awareness of students is good. The involvement of students in the local community, for example through support for elderly residents, is well developed. Students also contribute well to the development of the school through the school council. The development of skills to support future economic well being is good, for example, through opportunities to become involved in enterprise activities, vocational courses and work experience.

All the staff know students well and there are effective procedures for ensuring students' welfare. Performance data on each student is collected regularly. The management information system is beginning to be used to collate this centrally and establish a more consistent approach to the monitoring of attainment. In addition, there is extensive exchanging of information on students' progress between staff. The provision of additional support to students is good, including a mentor system in Year 11. Students commented positively on the willingness of teachers to give them help when they need it. Guidance at points of transition, such as when choosing courses at age 14, is good and there are very effective links with the Connexions service.

Students enter the school with standards that are broadly average, but there are considerable variations between different year groups. At the end of Key Stage 3 standards have been consistently above the national average for many years, but in 2007 provisional figures show a sharp decline in standards to below average. This reflects the high percentage of this year group that entered the school with standards that were below the nationally expected level. Standards are higher in mathematics and science than in English. At the end of Key Stage 4 performance is above average. There was a dip in examination results in 2006 which reflected the nature of the cohort, but provisional results for 2007 show that standards are again above average. Overall students make good progress and achieve well. However, the achievement of girls is better than that of boys and this is a particular issue in English. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities achieve in line with other students.

The standards achieved reflect teaching that is good overall and also the extensive support that teachers give to students identified as facing difficulties. In the best lessons, students are engaged by interesting activities that are adapted to meet the wide range of abilities within the groups. Teachers have high expectations and the pace of learning is good. However, there are occasions when the level of challenge does not fully meet the needs of all students and opportunities to involve students more actively in their learning are missed. In these lessons the pace of learning is slower and enjoyment is less evident. Targets are set for students in each subject and their use is well developed in year 11. However, in Key Stage 3 the targets are too broad and do not provide sufficiently small steps against which to measure progress.

Good examples were seen of marking which included comments that provided helpful advice on what students have to do to improve their attainment. Such comments are not used consistently in all subjects.

The curriculum is good and meets the needs of students well. The impact of technology college status is evident with information and communication technology (ICT) and technology being compulsory subjects in Key Stage 4. The integration of Religious Education (RE) into the tutorial curriculum and English is an innovative approach, but the school is rightly reviewing provision to ensure that it fully delivers the agreed syllabus across all year groups. The involvement of the school in the South Lakes partnership to develop vocational provision has resulted in a significant proportion of students attending a local college to pursue vocational courses. In addition a number of young people are involved in young apprenticeships and periods of extended work placements. The curriculum meets the needs of these young people particularly well and reflects the local economy appropriately.

An established leadership team provides clear direction for the school. In this small school, staff willingly take on a number of responsibilities and this reflects their strong commitment and hard work. The self-evaluation was accurate and involved all stakeholders including the governing body. The newly appointed head has correctly identified the key areas for the continued development of the school and is establishing plans for change. She is well supported by a governing body which has close links to the school. Governance is supportive but challenging and is effectively led by an extremely well informed chairperson. This feature, together with the established leadership team and the head's clear identification of priorities, illustrates that the capacity for further improvement is good. Financial management is good.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that marking in all subjects consistently provides clear advice on what students should do to improve their work.
- Ensure that targets in Key Stage 3 are sufficiently precise to allow detailed monitoring of progress.
- Ensure that the characteristics of the best teaching are shared with all staff.

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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 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	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?	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

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	3
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 Students

Inspection of Settlebeck High School, Cumbria, LA10 5AL

Thank you for the warm welcome you gave me when I inspected your school recently. I was grateful that you were prepared to talk to me about your work and share with me your views on the school.

You attend a good school. Your behaviour is good and you clearly enjoy the activities provided for you in and out of lessons. You work hard in your lessons and achieve standards that are above the national average. You make good progress and are well prepared for your future lives. Your teachers know you well and provide good care and guidance when you need it. They work hard to plan lessons that are interesting and almost all lessons are good. You are given additional help and support when you are finding work difficult. There are a good range of courses available to you in years 10 and 11 when you can choose to study vocational courses at the college. You benefit from a wide range of visits and extra curricular opportunities. Your new head teacher and her senior colleagues are managing the school well and with the governors are planning to improve it even more. You can help them by giving them your ideas and continuing to work hard and behave well.

We have asked the staff to help you to achieve even more by giving you clear targets for each subject in Years 7-9, providing advice in all subjects by including comments in marking on how you can improve and sharing their ideas on what makes the best lessons work well.

Yours sincerely

Garry Jones

Her Majesty's Inspector