

Gilsland CofE Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	112418
Local Authority	Cumbria
Inspection number	310886
Inspection date	14 September 2007
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	Foundation
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	18
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr David Murray
Headteacher	Mrs Lesley Whittle
Date of previous school inspection	1 June 2003
School address	Gilsland Brampton Cumbria CA8 7AA
Telephone number	01697 747302
Fax number	01697 747302

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

Gilsland Church of England Primary is much smaller than most schools. Pupils are taught in two mixed-age classes. Their attainment on entry to Reception varies from year to year but, judged over time, it is slightly below that typical of children of this age. All pupils are of White British heritage. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is above average.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

The overall effectiveness of the school is satisfactory. Parents are involved in the life of the school and appreciate the quality of education provided. They value the care and support their children receive and regard it as a fundamental part of the village community. Christian values and concern for children's welfare are central to the school's work.

Pupils' personal development and well-being are good and one of the school's strengths. The pupils are happy and secure; they say that they get on well together and there is never any bullying. They enjoy their work in the classroom, are eager participants in the after-school activities and look forward to trips away. Older pupils learn about the compromises of living together when on the annual residential visits. They also take responsibility for younger children during play and lunch breaks. Attendance rates are average and there is no unauthorised absence. Behaviour is good and there is effective support for any pupil who finds school routines difficult to manage. All pupils are involved in village and parish activities and show their concern for others through fundraising and charitable acts. They are made to feel involved in the development of the school through the work of the school council. Pupils' spiritual, moral and social development is good. Cultural development is satisfactory. By the time they leave school, the pupils have satisfactory literacy, numeracy and computer skills but they do not yet use them flexibly and effectively across all subjects of the curriculum.

Pupil numbers in each year group are small, ranging from two to four. Standards are average and the pupils' achievement is satisfactory. Each pupil makes satisfactory progress in relation to their capability and starting point. Pupils with learning difficulties also make satisfactory progress because additional support is tailored to their needs. Parents particularly expressed their appreciation of this aspect of the school's provision. The school is also skilled at enabling more able pupils to move ahead at their own pace because learning activities are adapted to their needs.

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory, and there is some which is very effective. Where teaching is good, expectations are high and learning activities challenge all pupils. Where it is satisfactory, work is not as well matched to meet the needs of pupils of different ages and abilities. As a result of measures taken by the headteacher, the quality of teaching is improving and having a beneficial impact on pupils' learning in an increasing proportion of lessons.

The curriculum is good and, for a school of this size, there is a wide range of after-school activities to broaden pupils' understanding of the work done in the classroom. The outdoor facilities are excellent and pupils make full use of the local environment to explore and play creatively. In this way, they gain in confidence and independence, learning to take responsibility and to find things out for themselves. Opportunities are now in place to enable pupils to extend their basic skills across all subjects, a priority in the school development plan. Care, guidance and support are good. The safeguarding of pupils is paramount in all the school does and risk assessments are thorough for all activities.

The headteacher provides strong leadership and is well respected by parents, pupils and staff. She has the support of a hardworking chair of governors who knows the school well and is actively involved with the work of pupils and staff. Recent staffing difficulties have been resolved because of the good leadership and management of the headteacher and chair of governors. As a result, better teaching is leading to good progress in information and communication technology (ICT) and science in Years 1 and 2. The most able children are

making satisfactory progress in those years and provision for children in Reception has also improved. These were areas needing improvement at the previous inspection. The steps taken, together with the effective use now made of assessments and target setting to maximise the progress of each pupil, mean that the school's capacity to improve further is good. The school has a realistic view of how well it is progressing and the appropriate priorities for improvement are clearly set out in the improvement plan for this academic year.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 3

Children start in Reception with varied skills and by the start of Year 1 reach the levels expected for children of their age. A few children exceed those expectations. This is because there have been significant improvements since the previous inspection in the quality of provision. Children settle quickly into the mixed-age class because of the warm and supportive approach, they enjoy their work and say they feel safe and secure. They talk easily with each other, the older children and adults about their experiences and they learn about others' needs and how to share. Parents work closely with the staff to promote their children's learning and therefore know how well they are doing.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that learning activities are adapted to the different needs and ages of the pupils.
- Develop pupils' ability to use their basic skills flexibly and effectively across all subjects of the curriculum.

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

Pupil numbers are very small and national comparisons have to be made with caution. Judged over time however, standards are average and pupils' achievement is satisfactory. Children join the school with a wide range of abilities and by the end of the Reception year attain the levels expected for children of this age. The younger pupils' underachievement evident in ICT and science at the last inspection has been tackled. Pupils make satisfactory progress throughout the school and by the time they leave standards are average in reading, writing, mathematics and science. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities progress at the same rate as others and reach the targets set for them. A few exceed those targets because of the effective support they receive from school staff and outside agencies. The most able pupils are also attaining the standards expected of them.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' personal development and well-being, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, are good. The pupils enjoy their work, they participate fully in the extra-curricular activities and they look forward to the trips out of school. Attendance rates are average and there is no unauthorised absence. Pupils eat healthily. The school is in a beautiful setting and pupils take full advantage of the natural environment to exercise regularly and play together.

They say they feel safe and secure and that there is always an adult there to turn to if they have any worries. They readily take advantage of the opportunities to exercise responsibility in school, including membership of the school council and helping the youngest children during play and the lunch break. Pupils are also involved in many activities in the local community which show their concern for others and their increasing self-confidence. Their satisfactory basic skills prepare them for the next stage of their education but many do not write well or use numbers to solve problems across all subjects of the curriculum.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching and learning are satisfactory. There is good teaching in the school. These teachers have high expectations of the pupils and the learning activities are graded in difficulty to meet pupils' different needs in the mixed-age classes. Such lessons give pupils opportunities to learn through doing and through working collaboratively. This was seen when the youngest pupils acted the part of characters in a story and had to say how convincing the performances were. Not only were they learning how to speak clearly, they were also developing their analytical skills. The assessment of pupils' work is used well to set challenging individual learning targets and they receive guidance on how well they are doing and what they must do to improve. Some teaching, however, is no better than satisfactory because it lacks this rigour, particularly in ensuring that work is adapted to meet the different age and ability needs in the class. Measures are in place to tackle this and in this second week of the academic year, improvements were noted in the quality of planning and in the use of a wider range of teaching resources.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is good and pupils respond eagerly to the extensive range of extra-curricular opportunities. The National Curriculum is delivered fully and planned to ensure progression in learning as pupils move through the school. Significant improvements have been made in the Foundation Stage curriculum since the previous inspection, so now children have extensive opportunities to play and learn indoors and outdoors. Pupils learn to be enterprising through organising their own stalls for the summer fair and making items to sell at the local agricultural show. Visiting speakers and sports coaches enhance provision. Every pupil was seen on the sports field, enjoying playing as a team member and developing ball skills under the guidance of a member of the Gretna football club. Pupils' cultural awareness is extended through visits out of school and through contacts with schools in other localities.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

This aspect of provision is good. The school is warm and caring and the needs of every child are known by the adults. Child protection procedures are in place and careful attention is paid to health and safety issues and risk assessments, particularly when pupils are out on trips. This was an issue for improvement at the time of the previous inspection. Good induction procedures help Reception children settle happily into new routines. There are effective links with parents and local agencies to meet the needs of the most vulnerable pupils, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Pupils' progress is monitored regularly against their individual

learning targets and appropriate support given if difficulties are spotted. Every opportunity is taken to praise pupils' achievements and to celebrate their successes.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership, management and governance are good. The headteacher provides strong leadership and this has been a key factor in resolving recent staffing difficulties and putting in place appropriate measures to improve the quality of the teaching. She and the chair of governors share a clear vision for the school's development and a commitment to equality of opportunity for every child. This has resulted in a common sense of purpose among staff. The evaluation of the school's performance is done well and appropriate priorities for improvement are in place. There is a strong sense of cohesion with the village community because of the good links with parents, the church and local agencies. The school is making effective use of challenging targets to increase the rate of pupils' progress and so raise standards. There have been significant improvements since the previous inspection and there is a determination to do even better in the future.

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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	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	3
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?	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	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

15 September 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Gilsland Church of England Primary School, Cumbria, CA8 7AA

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. The first lesson I saw was the football training you all did with the visiting coach and I was impressed with how well you worked together to improve your skills. You certainly enjoyed yourselves. Your school is in a beautiful setting and you are lucky to have such an abundance of nature around you.

You 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. Members of the school council told me about the improvements made in such things as computer facilities and equipment for the outside play areas. You know about the importance of leading a healthy lifestyle and balancing rest and play with work. Every pupil in your school is known well by every adult and the work in the mixed-age classes is organised so that pupils can progress at their own pace.

Yours is a satisfactory school with many strengths. 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 for pupils entering secondary school. Some of you exceed those standards and the school is working hard to enable more of you to do so.

Your teachers have agreed with me that you now need to make greater use of your writing, number and computer skills across all subjects of the curriculum. They also have plans to make every lesson interesting and challenging so that you get the best from your education.

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.

Yours sincerely

Brian Dower

Inspector