

Orton CofE School

Inspection report

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| Unique Reference Number | 112419 |
| Local Authority | Cumbria |
| Inspection number | 310887 |
| Inspection dates | 10–11 October 2007 |
| Reporting inspector | Terry McDermott |

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 aided |
| Age range of pupils | 3–11 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number on roll | |
| School | 71 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair | Mr Stephen Dunning |
| Headteacher | Mrs Rosemary Spence |
| Date of previous school inspection | 1 May 2003 |
| School address | Orton Penrith Cumbria CA10 3RG |
| Telephone number | 01539 624268 |
| Fax number | 01539 624268 |

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

This small school serves the village of Orton and the surrounding rural area. Social and economic circumstances are broadly average. Pupils are taught in mixed age classes each containing three year groups. All pupils are from White British or European backgrounds. A small number are at an early stage of learning English. The proportion of pupils with statements of special educational need is average and the proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is above average. A smaller than average proportion of pupils is eligible for free school meals. The school holds the National Healthy Schools Award, and the Active Mark.

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: 3

This is a satisfactory school. It evaluates itself more optimistically than this, but it does have a clear view of where it needs to improve. It is particularly successful at promoting pupils' personal development and well being, and in helping children in the Foundation Stage to make good progress. The headteacher sets the tone for a caring school which is valued by the pupils and by their parents, who are rightly confident that the school looks after their children well. Pupils enjoy coming to school and they say they feel secure and safe. Relationships between adults and pupils are good.

Pupils make satisfactory progress in Key Stages 1 and 2 to reach average standards at the end of both key stages, although this varies year on year because of the ability and small number of pupils in the group. Achievement overall is satisfactory, although it is good in the Foundation Stage.

Pupils' personal development and well being are good, because the school pays close attention to ensuring that their spiritual, social, moral and cultural development is effective. Pupils develop their self-confidence well and are prepared to voice their thoughts and ideas when given the opportunity both in and out of lessons. Young pupils settle into school well and quickly take on board the spirit of tolerance and patience which runs through every aspect of the school's work. Older pupils are very willing to give their time helping younger ones as friends, playground leaders, and monitors.

Teaching and learning are satisfactory. The best teaching encourages pupils to work independently and test out their own ideas. They learn quickly, and make good progress in these lessons because they have a clear picture of what they need to do to get better. At other times, the work does not always build upon the pupils' previous learning because assessment information is not used well enough. There are also times when pupils are asked to complete worksheets which lack challenge and which limit opportunities for them to think for themselves.

The curriculum is satisfactory. It covers all that the pupils should be expected to learn, though it is not always adapted well enough to meet the needs of all the pupils within the mixed-age classes. The school offers a good range of extracurricular activities which pupils say they enjoy.

The requirements for the safeguarding of children are met. In this small school, all the adults know the pupils and their families well. The school works effectively with other agencies and parents and this ensures that all pupils, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities receive the support they need in a timely manner. Academic guidance is satisfactory. Whilst the school accurately measures and tracks the progress pupils make, it does not make sufficient use of the information it gathers to check on the school's overall performance or to set challenging targets for the future. Not all pupils know their learning targets or how to improve their work.

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The headteacher has led the school through a difficult period of staff change and absence, and this has hampered the school's development. However, systems for checking the school's performance are becoming increasingly effective and the school has identified the right priorities for future improvement. Systems to monitor teaching are not yet robust enough to bring about the necessary improvements to the teaching and pupils' learning. The school has a satisfactory capacity to improve.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

The Foundation Stage is good because the quality of teaching, the imaginative activities and the resources for learning are all good. Many children start in the Foundation Stage with knowledge and skills that are generally below that typical for their age, although because of the small numbers involved there are wide variations year on year. Communication, language and literacy skills are below that typical for their age and some children have difficulty working and playing together. The children make good progress because adults have high expectations of them, and give them tasks which encourage cooperation and independence. By the time children leave the Foundation Stage they are working at the level expected for their age and are fully prepared for learning in Year 1.

What the school should do to improve further

- Focus the evaluation of teaching on the pupils' learning and use the information to ensure pupils make good progress.
- Improve the effectiveness of assessment to set challenging targets and share these with the pupils.
- Provide the pupils with more opportunities for independent learning.
- Adapt the curriculum where necessary to ensure it meets the needs of all pupils.

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

Achievement is satisfactory. Children enter Foundation Stage with knowledge and understanding that are generally below that typical for their age, but which varies significantly from year to year. They make good progress and by the time they start in Year 1 they are working at the levels expected for their age. Pupils make satisfactory progress in Key Stage 1 and by the end of Year 2, the 2006 teacher assessments show that standards are average in reading, writing and mathematics. Although the pupils make satisfactory progress in Key Stage 2, the results of the national tests in 2006 at the end of Year 6 were well below average. However, this result reflected the low starting points for this particular group of pupils. The 2007 provisional test results for Year 6 show an improvement and this small cohort of pupils are working at the levels expected for their age in English, mathematics and science. Those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and the small number of pupils who are learning English as an additional language also make satisfactory progress.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils are enthusiastic about school. Their attendance is above average, their behaviour is good, and they appreciate the support they receive from adults. Pupils work hard although they do not always have enough opportunities to develop their skills of working independently. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good, and is reflected in the consideration they show each other in school, and the charitable support they give for others in different parts of the world. They have a clear sense of right and wrong, and are polite and

cheerful. They say that they have no fear of being bullied, and are confident that they can approach any adult for help if they need it. All pupils have the opportunity to serve on the school council and this contributes to their strong sense of personal responsibility. Indeed the school council successfully initiated a partnership with a local secondary school to build a 'Secure Place' (their words) where anyone feeling lonely or upset could be helped by older pupils. They have a good knowledge of the requirements for leading a healthy lifestyle, take plenty of exercise, and eat healthily.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. This enables pupils to make satisfactory progress. All teachers have high expectations of good behaviour, and have established very positive relationships with pupils. Where teaching is good, lessons typically have a brisk pace, work closely matches the needs of all pupils, and teachers provide many opportunities for the pupils to work independently. In these lessons, pupils learn well and progress is good. In other lessons, the work does not always challenge all the pupils within the class and worksheets limit opportunities for independent work. This inevitably slows the pace of the learning. Work is marked regularly, but does not always inform the pupils about what they need to do to improve.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum is well balanced and covers all statutory requirements. A carefully planned four-year rolling programme of activities provides a satisfactory framework for engaging pupils' interest and developing their basic skills. However, year-on-year progress is not as effective as it could be because the curriculum does not always build upon the pupils' previous learning.

A detailed and effective programme promotes pupils' personal development. Extracurricular activities link well with the local and extended communities through visits to museums, local places of historical interest such as old lead mines, and further afield, to the Jorvik Centre in York. These successfully bring the curriculum to life. Visiting musicians and dancers from other parts of the world help raise pupils' awareness of different cultures.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

The school takes its responsibilities for safeguarding pupils seriously and meets all current requirements. The care and support for pupils' pastoral needs are good. Teachers and other adults know the pupils well, and are deeply committed to their individual safety and happiness. Pupils of all ages are encouraged to work harmoniously together, as a result of strongly espoused values of tolerance, respect, and consideration. Academic guidance is satisfactory. There are accurate records of pupils' progress but it is not always used well to inform the setting of school performance targets or pupils' individual learning targets. Many pupils do not have a clear enough understanding of what they must do to improve.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Due to significant staffing changes and absence it has been difficult for the headteacher to delegate responsibilities and this has led to some concerns identified at the last inspection being tackled late. Nevertheless, during this time the headteacher has led the school through the difficulties and the school has functioned smoothly on a day-to-day basis. Staff morale is high and parents and pupils are enthusiastic about their school. The monitoring of the school's effectiveness is satisfactory and becoming increasingly effective as more staff begin to influence developments. However, not all the information gained is used as well as it might be, for example, to set challenging targets or to improve the quality of teaching and learning. The school clearly knows what it must do to improve, but evaluations of performance are over generous because of the lack of rigour in some aspects. A relatively new governing body gives the school regular support, and governors are beginning to offer more challenge. Financial management is sound. The school has a satisfactory capacity to improve.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaints about school inspection', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

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

| | |
|---|-----|
| 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 | 2 |
| The capacity to make any necessary improvements | 3 |

Achievement and standards

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|--|---|
| 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? | 3 |
| 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

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| 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

15 October 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Orton CofE School, Cumbria, CA10 3RG

As you know, I visited your school recently, and I would like to thank you for your help in talking to me about the work you do, and telling me what you think about your school. This is what I found out.

I think that your school provides a satisfactory education for you. I know you enjoy coming to school because you told me so, and because I could see it for myself in your smiling faces. I believe that everyone in school takes good care of you, and makes sure that you are safe, happy and considerate of each other. You told me that there is always someone there to help when needed.

I also found out that children in the Nursery and Reception make good progress in learning how to co-operate and listen, and how to put their thoughts into words.

I watched you all behave well in lessons, but I think that you could learn more than you do now, indeed some of you told me that you found some lessons too easy.

So, these are the things your school is going to work on in the future:

- Ensure that the work you are set in lessons builds upon what you have already learned.
- Make it clearer what you are aiming to achieve, how well you are doing, and what you need to do next to get better.
- Give you all more opportunity to find things out for yourselves.
- Check more closely to ensure that you are learning as much as you can, and making as much progress as possible.

Please help your school to do this by continuing to be polite and happy children and by working especially hard.

Thank you once again for the help you gave me, and good luck to you all in the future.

Terry McDermott

Lead inspector