

Kells Infant School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	112169
Local Authority	Cumbria
Inspection number	325545
Inspection dates	9–10 June 2009
Reporting inspector	Pat Kime HMI

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

The registered childcare, managed by the governing body, was inspected under section 49 of the Childcare Act 2006.

Type of school	Infant
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	132
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	0
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	0
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Barry Prest
Headteacher	Mrs Margaret Kershaw
Date of previous school inspection	1 February 2006
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	High Road Whitehaven Cumbria CA28 9PQ
Telephone number	01946 852687
Fax number	01946 852688

Age group	3–7
Inspection dates	9–10 June 2009
Inspection number	325545

© Crown copyright 2009

Website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

Introduction

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

Description of the school

Kells Infant School is a smaller than average school located on the outskirts of the West Cumbrian town of Whitehaven. It serves an area which faces a high level of social and economic disadvantage. The proportion of pupils who receive free school meals is twice the national average. The number of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is broadly average for this size of school. Very few pupils are from minority ethnic backgrounds or learning English as an additional language. There are 72 children in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Of these, 41 are in Nursery and attend part-time and the remainder are in Reception, which is full-time. In the current Year 2, an unusually high proportion of pupils, almost two-thirds, are boys. The school is a member of the West Cumbria Excellence Cluster. It holds the Football Association Charter Standards Award.

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. In its very caring atmosphere pupils make good progress in their school work and come on very well in their personal and social development. They feel safe and develop into enthusiastic learners. They are well behaved and they enjoy school life with its wide range of interesting activities. Parents recognise the school's strengths and appreciate the approachability of staff.

Provision for pupils' well-being is especially good. Many pupils face difficulties in their lives and the school supports them very well. The partnership with other agencies to ensure pupils' welfare is outstanding, particularly for those who may be vulnerable and their families. The school is very active and successful in promoting healthy lifestyles with pupils and families. As a result, pupils are physically active and have excellent knowledge and understanding about what makes a healthy diet. Pupils have many opportunities to contribute to the school community and the life of the local area and to participate in activities related to the arts. The provision to promote community cohesion and develop pupils' awareness of diversity in Britain and around the world is satisfactory. The standards pupils achieve, along with the personal attributes they develop, stand them in good stead to benefit from the next stage of their education.

In recent years there has been an upward trend in standards. In the current Year 2 standards are broadly average and they represent very good achievement, given the pupils' well below average starting point in Nursery. Progress is not entirely even through the school. This is because, although most of the teaching is good, some is less effective. The impact of this is largely mitigated by support and extra teaching for some pupils so, by the end of Year 2, very few are underachieving. Provision for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is strong and the Nurture Group is particularly successful in promoting the learning and development of those with personal, social or behavioural difficulties.

The curriculum is good. It gives due prominence to basic skills and is enriched well with a wide range of activities beyond lessons and many special events, for instance the science festival. The school has begun to teach several subjects through topics, such as 'Ourselves and other animals'. This approach adds to pupils' interest in their work and has enhanced the opportunities for them to write for a range of purposes in different subjects. That said, the planning of topic work is not yet sufficiently rigorous to be certain that everything required will be covered well and work will become progressively more demanding.

The school is led and managed well in most respects. The headteacher and assistant headteacher have an accurate picture of the school's strengths and areas in need of development. They set a clear direction for the school and there are effective plans to tackle appropriate development priorities. Staff are enthusiastic for continuous improvement and have good ideas for further developing the subjects which they lead. Governors are well-informed about the school's effectiveness and they provide a good balance of support and challenge. However, while efforts have been made to improve the less effective teaching and its impact has been minimised, the issue has not been tackled robustly enough.

The school has shown sound capacity to continue improving. This is evident from the improvements made in the three years since the last inspection, the clear grasp of what could be better, and the enthusiasm of staff for developing the school's provision.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children get a good start in the Nursery and Reception classes where they develop an enthusiasm for learning. They make good gains in learning, particularly in their personal and social development. By the end of Reception they reach broadly average standards in most areas of learning but their knowledge of phonics and their early writing skills are below average. Staff in these classes create a safe, positive and well-ordered learning environment in which the children thrive and develop a good degree of independence and concentration. The activities provided for the children are matched well to their learning needs and stage of development. Much of the teaching seen was good and the children's achievement is evidence of the effectiveness of the teaching over time. At times, opportunities are missed to develop children's vocabulary and to promote progress in speaking, listening, early reading and writing in play settings, such as role-play areas. The resources for learning out of doors have improved since the last inspection.

Although the Early Years Foundation Stage provision is effective, liaison between the two classes is not systematic and it is not assured that provision is always planned coherently across the key stage. Reallocation of teachers to classes across the school has resulted in a hiatus in the leadership and management for the Early Years Foundation Stage. Nevertheless, one of the teachers is taking a lead. She has a good grasp of where improvements could be made and the commitment, enthusiasm and expertise to make them happen.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the quality of teaching where it is not sufficiently effective so that pupils make the progress they should in all lessons.
- Promote greater continuity and coherence in the Early Years Foundation Stage by strengthening joint planning and provision between the Nursery and the Reception class.
- Further develop the curriculum by:
 - planning topic work rigorously to assure progression in pupils' learning in all subjects
 - providing more opportunities to promote community cohesion and for pupils to learn about diversity in Britain and the wider world.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils do well at Kells Infant School. When children start in Nursery, the majority can do a lot less than most children of their age and their early literacy skills and personal and social skills are often particularly weak. By the time they leave at the end of Year 2, most boys and girls have made very good progress and standards are at least broadly average. However, behind this broad overall picture there is some unevenness which reflects inconsistency in the quality of teaching. Where there are two classes catering for pupils of the same age, pupils' progress is not equally good in both.

From 2006 to 2008, standards rose each year. The standards reached by last year's leavers were above average and represented outstanding progress from their starting points in Nursery, with particularly good progress in Key Stage 1; girls did exceptionally well. In the current Year 2, standards are broadly average and represent good progress overall, though a small number of pupils have not done as well as they should, most notably in reading and writing. This year group made better progress up to the end of Reception than in Key Stage 1.

Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, including behavioural difficulties, make particularly good progress. The Nurture Group provides very well for a number of these pupils and teaching assistants support them well in class lessons.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils make very good progress in this aspect of their learning. They gain in confidence, independence and social skills in the school's calm and very caring atmosphere. They enjoy school. This is evident from their enthusiasm for learning and participation in the full range of activities on offer. The attendance rate is better than the national average for schools with a similar proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals.

The vast majority of pupils are very well behaved in school. They are considerate of each other and they follow instructions and safe routines. Nonetheless, when lessons are not challenging, a few pupils misbehave. Pupils say that, if anyone is picked on or there are disagreements between pupils, staff sort the problem out quickly.

Pupils develop a good understanding of their role and contribution in the school community and the recently established school council has a high profile. Pupils also contribute to the local community. For instance, they participate in community events, entertain elderly residents of local residential homes and contribute to projects to enhance the community, such as planting heathers on the nearby coastal path.

The school promotes healthy lifestyles very successfully with pupils and families. Consequently, pupils have an outstanding level of understanding, for their age, about how to keep healthy. For example, they know that it is important not only to eat five portions of fruit and vegetables each day but also that these should be a range of colours. They know that it is not good to eat a lot of sweets or fried foods and give examples of them. Pupils have many opportunities to participate in physical activity and sports and there is good take up of these.

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good overall. Moral and social development are particularly strong. Pupils develop some awareness of cultural, ethnic and racial diversity through special events, for instance the school's Chinese cultural week, and the annual visit from an African dancer. Pupils' social development also benefits from some joint activities with other schools in the area.

Most pupils reach the standard expected for their age in literacy and numeracy skills and their personal development is good. Together, these factors mean that they are well-prepared to benefit from the next stage of their education.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The teaching enables most pupils to make good progress and achieve well. The bulk of the teaching is of at least good quality but some is satisfactory and, at times, slips to inadequate.

In the typical good lessons, staff capture pupils' interest and introduce new work in appealing ways. The tasks they set for pupils often include practical activities which take good account of boys' interests and keep them involved in learning. Relationships are excellent and there is a sense of staff and pupils enjoying lessons together. Staff have high expectations for pupils'

behaviour and attitudes, and for what pupils can achieve. They manage pupils' behaviour skilfully so that, even though a number of pupils have behavioural difficulties, lessons proceed smoothly. They use question and answer sessions well to assess pupils' understanding and to push their thinking on. They tailor work carefully to match the range of pupils' learning needs. Occasionally, good or satisfactory lessons are marred by a lack of sufficient challenge for the brighter pupils or pupils become a little restless because they have to sit and listen for too long before getting down to work. Marking and feedback to pupils has improved since the previous inspection and is now good overall, with some that is of a very good quality. Classroom support staff, such as teaching assistants, are highly skilled and teamwork between them and teachers is very good.

On the occasions when teaching is not effective, it is because there is a lack of clarity about exactly what the pupils are to learn, the pace of learning is too slow and work is not adapted enough to meet pupils' different abilities.

The classrooms and shared areas of the school generally provide a stimulating learning environment. Pupils' work is displayed attractively and there are lots of displays that support their learning and help them to work with a good degree of independence. Displays are also used effectively to promote good behaviour, social development and positive attitudes to learning. This element of teaching is particularly strong for the Nurture Group.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The school's curriculum covers all that is required. Good attention is paid to developing basic skills in literacy and numeracy and intervention programmes are provided which ensure that most pupils at risk of underachieving meet their targets in these basic skills. The provision to promote personal development, including healthy lifestyles, is a particular strength.

The curriculum is enhanced with a wide range of activities beyond everyday lessons, which broaden pupils' horizons. These include visits and visitors to school and after-school clubs which emphasise sports but also cater for a range of interests over the year. Educational visits make good use of the rich local environment and, for many pupils, introduce them to the nearby lakes and mountains. For example, pupils undertake environmental work with the National Trust at Loweswater. A strong feature of the curriculum is the special focus days or weeks concentrating on particular subjects and involving parents. These have included a science festival which brought local scientists into school to work with pupils on scientific investigations; an arts festival; and a sports week. The school's links with other schools through its membership of the local excellence cluster have facilitated much of the enrichment of the curriculum, particularly in the arts and personal, social and health education.

Since the last inspection, opportunities for pupils to use and develop skill in writing in a variety of styles, across a range of subjects have improved. The school has begun to teach several subjects through cross-curricular topics. This approach motivates the pupils and staff are implementing it effectively. However, the planning underpinning this curricular organisation is not yet rigorous enough to assure that, there is full coverage of every aspect of every subject or that work in all subjects becomes progressively more demanding as pupils get older.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

This is a very caring school which provides especially good pastoral care. The arrangements for safeguarding pupils fully meet government requirements and child protection matters are dealt with very well. Pupils are confident that they can take any problems they may have to staff who will help them. Parents are confident in the quality of care, for example, one mentioned in a letter to the inspectors that, 'I am always happy and content when leaving my son in the hands of this school'. The school works extremely well with other agencies, such as social services, Sure Start, housing associations, sports clubs and the Workers Educational Association, to promote pupils' physical and emotional well-being.

Academic guidance and support have improved since the last inspection. Nonetheless, the marking of pupils' work and other feedback to them on their progress in learning, though often good, is not yet of a consistent quality.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher, staff and governors know the local community exceptionally well and have the confidence of the pupils' families. They are strongly committed to ensuring that the pupils do well, to providing a high quality of care, and to continuous improvement. They work hard to achieve this aim and, for the most part, do so well. Several aspects of the school's work have improved in the three years since it was last inspected.

The headteacher and assistant headteacher have a good grasp of the school's strengths, the effectiveness of teaching and the areas for development. The school's plan for improvement sets out clearly what will be done to move things forward and the priority areas in it are all relevant. Self-evaluation is undertaken for each subject as well as for the school as a whole and, as a result, appropriate priorities for development are identified for each subject, for instance a greater emphasis on experimental and investigative work in science. These are known and understood by staff. The school has been managed to minimise the impact of the less effective teaching on pupils' overall achievement. As a result, underachievement is limited but, nonetheless, some pupils do not progress as rapidly as they might. Steps have been taken to improve such teaching but they have not proved sufficiently effective.

The school has introduced a good system for keeping track of whether pupils are making the progress they should to meet appropriate targets for the end of each year. This system is quite new and has not yet been analysed rigorously or fully integrated with the arrangements to manage teachers' performance.

Governance is good. Good dialogue between governors and staff at all levels in the school ensures that governors are well-informed about the school's performance and they are aware of its successes and areas for development. They provide a good balance of support and challenge. The governing body has been proactive, with staff, in forging links with other local schools and has supported additional training, notably for support staff. However, the governing body carries three vacancies, two for local authority representatives and one for a parent.

The school's contribution to community cohesion is satisfactory. Pupils develop an understanding of community. The school itself is a harmonious community. The work of the school council

helps all pupils to understand that they can have a part to play in school life and staff go to considerable trouble to involve parents in school. Pupils also contribute to a range of events in the local area. They have some opportunities to meet people from background different from their own but there is scope to extend these, particularly in relation to pupils' awareness and understanding of diversity in Britain and the wider world.

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

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
--	-----------------------

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 capacity to make any necessary improvements	3

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	2
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	2
How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	2
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	2
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	2
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	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/or disabilities make progress	2

¹Grade 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.

Personal development and well-being

How good are 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	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
The extent to which 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 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

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 eliminated	3
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	3
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

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

11 June 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Kells Infant School, Cumbria, CA28 9PQ

You might remember that I came to your school recently to see how well all the children are learning. My colleague, Mrs Murray, came with me to find out more about how schools are inspected. Thank you for welcoming us in such a friendly and helpful way. Thank you also for talking to us about your school. We enjoyed seeing your lessons and looking at the work you have done.

You go to a good school. There are lots of interesting things for you to do. You clearly enjoy school and want to learn. You do well in your learning because you are taught well. The teachers usually make lessons interesting. You are very well looked after at school so it was no surprise to hear that you feel safe. I was impressed by how much you know about healthy eating and the importance of exercise. You have clearly learned a lot from 'Freddy Fit'.

Mrs Kershaw, the staff and the governors want to make your school even better. I am sure they can succeed in this because they have improved a lot of things already and they know what needs to be done now. We agreed that they should concentrate on three things. These are:

- making sure that you make good progress in all lessons
- getting the staff in Nursery and Reception working together more to plan the children's work
- planning topic work carefully for all subjects and making sure that you have plenty of opportunities to learn about the lives and traditions of different people in Britain and the wider world.

I expect you will have some good ideas about how to improve these things. You can all help the staff doing your very best at all times. You have my very best wishes for the future.

Yours faithfully

Pat Kime

Her Majesty's Inspector