

St Matthew's CofE School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	112308
Local Authority	Cumbria
Inspection number	325572
Inspection date	29 January 2009
Reporting inspector	John Heap

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	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	30
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	Mrs Caroline Baxter
Headteacher	Mrs Sue Fernyhough
Date of previous school inspection	6 July 2006
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Westnewton Wigton Cumbria CA7 3NT
Telephone number	01697 320545
Fax number	01697 320545

Age group	4–11
Inspection date	29 January 2009
Inspection number	325572

© 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 two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This very small school serves an area with few signs of social and economic disadvantage. The proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals is well below average. Almost all pupils are from White British backgrounds. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities is above average, including those with a statement of special educational need. The school provides for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage and they are taught in a class with Year1 and 2 pupils. An acting headteacher was appointed in September 2008 until summer 2009. The school has achieved Active Mark status.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 4

In accordance with section 13 (3) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires special measures because it is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school.

Since the last inspection there has been a decline in the school's overall effectiveness and it is now inadequate. Consequently, inspectors do not agree with the school's own judgement that it is satisfactory. None of the areas for improvement identified in the previous report have been addressed adequately.

Results in national tests at the end of Year 6 have to be viewed with caution because of the small number of pupils in each year group. Nevertheless, the trend in results has been that of decline, particularly in English. Standards reached by the end of Year 6 are below average because pupils do not make as much progress as they should in Years 3 to 6. This is confirmed by the fact that fewer than half of the Year 6 pupils in 2008 made the expected progress, given their prior attainment in Key Stage 1 and their circumstances.

Current evidence found in books and in the tracking of pupils' progress show many pupils continue to make inadequate progress, particularly in English. The basic skills of handwriting, spelling and punctuation are very weak, even for the highest attaining pupils. In mathematics and science, there is little evidence of pupils solving problems or doing investigations. The organisation of pupils' work is very poor. Pupils say they find the work easy. The reasons for these shortcomings are found in the inadequate teaching, curriculum, guidance and support. Teachers' expectations of pupils are not high enough and the curriculum fails to meet individual needs. Basic skills are not used and developed across subjects and the teaching does not provide clear enough guidance for pupils. As a result, pupils are inadequately prepared for their future learning.

Pupils' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is satisfactory overall, although their awareness of the cultural diversity of British society is underdeveloped. Good relationships and a caring ethos promote pupils' moral and social development and their enjoyment of school. Attendance is above average and behaviour is mostly good. However, where lessons are weak, too many pupils, mainly boys, become distracted and do very little work. Pupils have a good appreciation of the importance of leading safe and healthy lifestyles. They are keen to accept responsibilities, most particularly when they are helping others. The school council also makes a sound contribution to the management of the school.

Leadership and management are inadequate. The acting headteacher has made a satisfactory start to her work by making some changes to teaching in Key Stage 2 which is bringing about better organisation of pupils' work in mathematics. However, she faces a very difficult task. The legacy of inadequate progress made by pupils, the large and growing budget deficit, and the fact that the school has not successfully resolved the weaknesses identified earlier means that the school's capacity to improve is severely hindered. The governing body has weak monitoring and evaluation practices and has not understood the reasons for the decline in the school's effectiveness. Nevertheless, there are signs of a more robust approach to facing the budget deficit.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 3

When children start Nursery, their skills and abilities are broadly typical for their age, By the end of Reception, most children are working at broadly average levels in most areas of learning although the performance of boys is below that of girls. Children have a satisfactory start to their education in the Reception class; they settle quickly and enjoy their time. Nevertheless, children are not always fully engaged in worthwhile learning activities and opportunities to develop their language skills are missed. Planning for play and exploration is matched to children's interests and abilities, both indoors and outside. Resources for learning inside the classroom are adequate but the outdoor provision is limited. As a result, children in Reception do not always have the freedom for continuous play or to learn in their chosen environment. Staff make the best use of what is available and provide a variety of suitable activities which promote children's development. However, there is an imbalance which results in more adult-led activities rather than opportunities to develop children's independence through free choice. Satisfactory leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage continue to identify and seek development. Improvements in the use of assessment to identify next steps in learning, for instance, are increasingly enabling staff to refine and plan for children's individual needs through detailed observation.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve pupils' progress, particularly in English, mathematics and science.
- Improve the quality of teaching so that pupils are challenged, interested and make more rapid progress.
- Ensure that the curriculum meets the needs of all pupils and broadens their understanding of diversity in British society.
- Improve the use of target-setting, marking and tracking pupils' achievements so that pupils know the progress they are making and what they need to do next.
- Improve leadership and management at all levels so the school has a clear picture of its strengths and weaknesses and what it has to do to improve.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 4

Pupils enter Year 1 with broadly average skills and abilities. They make satisfactory progress in Years 1 and 2 and leave Key Stage 1 with average standards. The school's results in Key Stage 1 assessments fluctuate over time because year groups are often very small. Mathematics is the strongest subject and writing has been stronger than reading.

Too few pupils make the expected progress in Key Stage 2 and, by the end of Year 6, the standards they reach are well below those expected. This means that their achievement is inadequate. Pupils' work in books and the data kept on their achievements confirm this picture. Boys, in particular, make slow progress and underachieve. Standards have declined and pupils underachieve because of the

school's inability to bring about the necessary improvements in basic English and problem-solving in mathematics, as well as in the guidance and support provided for pupils.

Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and the more able make inadequate progress, particularly in Key Stage 2. Basic skills are not being developed in a sufficiently systematic and sustainable manner.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

Pupils' strong moral and social development means that they are usually friendly, polite and eager to please. Behaviour is generally good around the school and in classrooms. Pupils say they feel safe. However, pupils' understanding of the cultural richness and diversity of society is underdeveloped. Most pupils are enthusiastic to learn and the above average attendance indicates they enjoy school. However, keenness and enjoyment are not always harnessed by staff to promote maximum learning in lessons. Consequently, pupils do not make the progress they should or increase their life chances. Pupils know and understand well that they have important choices to make about leading healthy and safe lifestyles. They discuss the pros and cons of the contents of their snack and the quality of lunch. Boys are very keen to talk about football and pupils enjoy the limited additional opportunities to play sport or do gardening to keep fit. Other activities on offer that support their understanding are: gardening, cooking and netball. Pupils make a sound contribution to the school community through: the deliberations of the school council and pupils in Year 6 willingly taking on lunchtime supervision duties and model good behaviour in the dining room. Other more distant communities benefit from pupils raising money for charity.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 4

The quality of teaching has too little impact on pupils' learning, particularly in Key Stage 2. Typically, pupils enjoy good relationships with staff but there are inconsistent expectations of pupils' behaviour and attitudes. Consequently, work in books is often unfinished, untidy and lacking in organisation, particularly among the boys. The excessive use of worksheets restricts the chance to write and does little to help understanding. This was very clear in Year 3 where pupils did not understand the method of comparing adjectives and took a very long time to write anything. In Key Stage 1, strengths in the satisfactory teaching included work matched to pupils' interests, ability and age, and challenging questioning. Consequently, learning was satisfactory and pupils were interested. However, teaching provided limited opportunities for pupils to work independently.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 4

The promotion of pupils' academic development is weak. There is a concentration on developing literacy and numeracy skills in order to raise basic standards. However, the curriculum does not provide enough opportunities across all subjects for these skills to be regularly used and improved. There are far too few opportunities in mathematics and science for pupils to investigate and solve problems. The use of information and communication technology is inconsistent and too often lacks challenge. The promotion of pupils' personal development is satisfactory. Pupils are being given more opportunities to be involved in a wider variety of activities through the consortium of six small rural schools. These provide workshops and

sporting events for gifted and talented pupils and opportunities for pupils to work together in a larger group and broaden their understanding of the local and wider community. The curriculum does not meet the needs of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities or the more able because not enough attention is given to assessing pupils' skills. Consequently, expectations are too low and individual needs are not understood or catered for adequately.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 4

This is a caring school where most pupils' personal development needs are adequately met. The robust monitoring of behaviour and attendance means that pupils are not concerned about bullying or unnecessary absence. Child protection and safeguarding procedures are in place, although policy updates have not been ratified by the governing body. Pupils say they feel safe in the school. Guidance and support for pupils' academic progress are unsatisfactory, particularly for the more able pupils and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. There are adequate procedures to track pupils' achievements but the impact on pupils' progress is very weak. This is because there is no coherent method of linking pupils' individual learning targets, the marking of their work and the identification of the next steps in their learning.

Leadership and management

Grade: 4

Significant change took place in September 2008, with the appointment of an acting headteacher for the year. A new chair of governors also took up post. Both of these leaders started their work in difficult circumstances because of weaknesses in the school's monitoring and evaluation procedures and its practices and planning for improvement. These weaknesses resulted in the decline in academic standards and provision and poor use of targets to raise standards. Moreover, a significant budget deficit has developed that governors were not aware of. Policy-making has lacked rigour, particularly in relation to safeguarding pupils. However, actions are now in place to remedy these very serious shortcomings with governors recognising that they need extra training, a more systematic approach to policy-making and a greater robustness in monitoring finance and pupils' progress. As a result of these initiatives, the governors are better placed to be a 'critical friend' and, with the help of the acting headteacher, self-evaluation is now improving. The acting headteacher has a realistic understanding of the issues facing the school. Training courses are being attended, the budget is more closely monitored, policy-making is more robust and timely and expert advice has been sought about health and safety issues. It is too early to see the impact of these initiatives and this is why governance and capacity to improve cannot be judged satisfactory. The promotion of community cohesion is satisfactory.

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?	4
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	No
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well being?	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	4

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	3
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	3
How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	3
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	3
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	3
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	3

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	4
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	4
How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress	4

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?	3
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	3
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	3
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	4

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?	4
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	4
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	4

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	4
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	4
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	4
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	4
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	3
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	4
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	4
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	Yes
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

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

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Matthew's CofE School, Cumbria, CA7 3NT.

On behalf of the inspection team, may I thank you for the generous welcome and hospitality that you gave the inspectors when we visited your school. We were delighted when many of you talked freely with us and we were impressed by the courtesy and help you provided. We found some good and satisfactory things about your school, but not enough. We have decided that St Matthews' requires special measures because it is not giving you a good enough standard of education. Here are some of the important things we found:

What we liked about your school:

- your good attitudes to work and school
- the contribution made by the school council and other pupils with responsibilities
- the help and support you give each other
- the caring atmosphere in the school that helps you to feel safe and secure.

In order to make your education better, the school needs to:

- help you to make better progress in English, mathematics and science, particularly in Years 3 to 6
- improve teaching and learning, so that you are more interested in your work and make quicker progress
- make sure that sure that the work planned for you is carefully matched to your individual needs
- make better use of your learning targets, the marking of your work and the records of your progress to show you how much progress you are making and what you need to do to get even better
- with help from the governors, do a lot more work on checking what is good and what needs to improve.

Inspectors will visit the school to check that these things are happening. You can be a great help in this by always doing your best work and by following closely the guidance of your teachers. You may also be asked to comment on what the school does well and what could be better.

The inspection team wishes you well and good luck for the future.

Yours sincerely,

John Heap (Lead inspector)