

St Oswald's Church of England Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	112314
Local Authority	Cumbria
Inspection number	325575
Inspection dates	24–25 June 2009
Reporting inspector	Brian Dower

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)	0
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	Rev Nigel Davies
Headteacher	Mr James Douglas
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	Howgill Close Burneside Kendal Cumbria LA9 6QR

Age group	4–11
Inspection dates	24–25 June 2009
Inspection number	325575

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an additional inspector.

Description of the school

St Oswald's Church of England Primary School is much smaller than most primary schools. The area it serves is economically and socially mixed. Pupils are mostly from White British backgrounds. There are very few pupils of a minority ethnic heritage and none at an early stage of learning English. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is average. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, including those with a statement of need, is above average. Very few pupils start or leave the school at times other than the beginning or end of an academic year. Early Years Foundation Stage provision comprises a Reception class. There is a pre-school group on the premises which is independently run and was inspected separately by Ofsted. The school has a number of awards, including the Healthy Schools Award and Investors in People.

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 has outstanding features in its provision. Parents and carers are supportive and pleased with the progress their children are making. Well over half of families returned the questionnaire. Many praised the creative way the outstanding curriculum is structured to cover the basics and to broaden pupils' understanding of the world around them, give enjoyment and stimulate a desire to know more. Others highlighted the Christian values which underpin the school's work and the fact that all pupils are known by every adult in the school. They rightly see these as contributing significantly to the outstanding care and support their children receive.

Standards are average and pupils' progress and what they achieve in relation to their below average starting points are good. All groups of pupils progress equally well. The standard of some of the work seen was excellent. The art work on display is impressive in terms of its technical execution, its accurate representation of shape and proportion, and its imaginative use of colour and shade. The creative writing seen in some of the older pupils' books revealed a flexible and imaginative use of language. Topic work is organised to a high standard and pupils have the ability to use photographs, charts and drawings well to illustrate their research.

Pupils' personal development and their behaviour are good. They say they feel safe in school and that they enjoy their work. They follow healthy daily routines, seen in the amount of exercise they take and what they choose to eat for lunch. They make an excellent contribution to their own and the wider community, and they are satisfactorily prepared for the next stage in their education. The school's ambition is to raise standards further to give pupils an even better start in secondary school.

Teaching and learning are good. Teachers have good subject knowledge and plan well to meet the needs of all pupils. They use regular assessments to inform that planning, identify difficulties and provide additional support to help overcome them. Skilled and committed teaching assistants play a key role in supporting pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those high attainers who need extra stimulation and challenge. There are occasions, however, when the pace of learning in lessons slows because learning activities do not have appropriate time constraints. The school has made excellent use of the generous space at its disposal inside the school building and in the school grounds to create a stimulating learning environment. It also makes good use of a range of teaching resources from the local and wider environment to give relevance to pupils' learning. The school is successful in giving coherence to pupils' learning through excellent cross-curricular work.

Leadership, management and governance are good. Self-assessment is accurate and appropriate priorities are in place to take the school forward. For example, the priority given to improving provision in the Reception class has brought improvements in assessments and monitoring which have led to children's good progress this year. All staff have leadership roles in such a small school and they are diligent and effective in carrying out their responsibilities. This is an inclusive school where the vulnerable and disadvantaged feel secure and make good progress. Its contribution to the life of the local and wider community is outstanding.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 3

The effectiveness of provision is satisfactory. The school's records show that the skills children bring to the Reception Year are less well developed than normally seen. In their language, communication and social development and their understanding of the world around them they are recorded as well below expected levels. Children now coming to the end of their Reception Year have been assessed as slightly below average. It is not possible to say if this is an instance of good progress being made in the Early Years Foundation Stage because past assessments have been unreliable. The accuracy and reliability of assessments have improved but it remains to be seen whether such analytical rigour is sustained. During the inspection, children were making satisfactory progress.

There have been further improvements. Provision for outdoor learning is now good, giving a wide choice of activities to promote sharing and independent learning. Children make good progress in their social and emotional development. Close liaison with pre-school providers and with parents and carers help children settle quickly. Priority is given to helping them work and play harmoniously together. They are then encouraged to play a full part in the life of the school, for example, by contributing to assemblies and having representatives on the school council. Children's welfare is well promoted.

Teaching and learning are satisfactory and improving. There are occasions when learning activities are not tightly structured and the learning objectives are too general. Children then become distracted and the pace of learning slows. The indoor learning environment lacks stimulation and does not provide sufficiently for children's creative development and their sense of wonder and awe. There have been improvements in leadership and management and they are now satisfactory.

What the school should do to improve further

- Give greater structure to learning activities in the Early Years Foundation Stage and develop the classroom as an exciting place in which to work.
- Use time judiciously in all lessons to give pace and challenge to pupils' learning.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Standards are average and pupils' achievement is good. They make good progress in relation to their below average starting points.

Caution has to be exercised when comparing such a small school's results with national data in any one year. The analysis of standards and achievement over time is a more reliable indicator of how well the school is doing. Standards by the end of Year 6 in English, mathematics and science have been average over the last three years, although there was a slight dip in performance in 2008 because the pupils' abilities were less strong than in previous years. Performance targets were exceeded in English but missed in mathematics. The quality of work seen now and the school's assessments show that progress has improved in mathematics and pupils are well placed to attain at nationally expected levels and meet or exceed their attainment targets. The past good progress pupils have made in English is being maintained.

Standards at the end of Year 2 have improved from well below average in 2006 to average in 2008. The school's assessments and inspection evidence show that there has been an

improvement this year in the standard of pupils' writing compared with 2008. The progress pupils make and their levels of achievement in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Key Stage 1 are good.

Throughout the school, boys and girls achieve equally well. High attaining pupils reach their targets. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those few from a minority ethnic background make the same good progress as others.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' personal development and well-being, including their social and moral development, are good. Their spiritual and cultural development is excellent. Pupils demonstrate respect for the individuality of others and have a sense of self-worth. They speak about the beauty of nature and the place of other living creatures in the scheme of things. The work they do in art, music and design and technology, their understanding of others' religious beliefs and the diversity of social customs, and the links they have with schools in the North East and abroad have broadened their knowledge of the wider world. They say they feel safe and secure in school and that they enjoy their work. Attendance rates are above average. Pupils eat healthy lunches and take plenty of exercise. Behaviour is good and the rare instances of bullying are dealt with quickly and effectively. Pupils know right from wrong. Their contribution to the school and wider community is outstanding. The school council is active in improving the school, particularly the outside environment, and has its own budget. The older pupils help with school routines and play their part in supporting the younger children in their work and looking out for them at breaks and lunch time. They understand that with rights come responsibilities, thus laying the foundations of good citizenship. Pupils are satisfactorily prepared for the next stage in their lives because they have good personal qualities and basic skills which are typical for their age. The school has the improvement of these basic skills and the raising of standards in English and mathematics as development priorities to ensure pupils have the best preparation for the future.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are good. Pupils are keen to learn and the standard of presentation in their books is testimony to their positive attitudes. They work well together, for example, when evaluating each other's work. They can work independently and creatively, as seen in the imaginative art work displayed around the school. Pupils learn best when involved in practical and problem solving activities and in project work which crosses curriculum boundaries. They find this approach interesting and they rise to the challenge. Work on calculations in a Year 6 mathematics lesson was preparation for collecting information about a woodland project and for a presentation to pupils in a Sunderland school. There have been improvements in the use of information and communication technology as a teaching and learning aid. Pupils in Years 1 and 2 were using decision making programmes to help with classification work in science. Teachers and teaching assistants are committed and hard working. There is a good balance between experienced and highly capable staff and younger teachers who are already making a significant contribution to how well pupils learn. Good teaching was seen during the inspection and evidence from pupils' books shows it to have been consistently good throughout this

academic year. The use of time to ensure pace in pupils' learning was less effective in some lessons, leading to slower progress.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

Curriculum provision is outstanding. It is rooted in providing first-hand experiences for all pupils and in a rich variety of sporting, cultural, artistic, scientific and community linked activities. Cross-curricular topic work, which incorporates all aspects of the National Curriculum, is linked to the local area and pupils' own experiences and then broadens out to include the wider community and national issues. The work pupils do in art is outstanding and provides a stimulating backdrop to learning in most classrooms. There is often excellent work in design and technology, and music plays a large part in pupils' cultural awareness and creative development. There are visits away. The experience of visiting the Ribbleshead viaduct fired pupils' admiration for daring and enterprising projects, as well as stimulation for their art work and ideas for design and technology. There are many visitors to the school who contribute to pupils' personal development, their health and safety and their awareness of the world at large. The range of extra-curricular activities is wide for such a small school. They are well attended and do much for pupils' self-esteem and enjoyment of school. The school is looking to expand its national and international links with other schools and embrace newer technologies as ways of developing the curriculum further.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

In this small school every pupil is known by every adult. Class sizes are small. Teachers and teaching assistants are caring and sensitive to pupils' needs. The concern for the welfare of the individual is rooted in the school's Christian values. Pupils say they feel supported and that there is always someone to turn to if they have worries. Such exemplary care and support enable all pupils to make good progress academically and in their personal development. This is apparent in the progress made by pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. For example, one pupil progressed academically from below average at the end of Year 2 to above average in Year 6 in 2008. This gave him the self-esteem to move confidently to the next stage in his education. Child protection procedures are well established and comply with government requirements. Health and safety audits are conducted regularly and risk assessments are undertaken when the nature of learning activities require them. There have been significant improvements in the academic guidance given to pupils since the previous inspection. It is now good because teachers' marking is regular and detailed, and clear pointers are given for improvement. Younger pupils receive encouraging oral feedback on their work. There is rigorous monitoring of pupils' progress over time and prompt and effective strategies when underachievement is revealed.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership, management and governance are good. The headteacher provides strong leadership and a clear vision for the future direction of the school. In such a small school, all staff are involved in leadership activities and these they undertake efficiently and effectively. They monitor pupils' progress well and make good use of challenging targets to raise standards. Very

good use is made of professional development opportunities to hone teaching skills and share good practice. All are committed to equality of opportunity, apparent in the participation of all pupils in trips away and extra-curricular activities. The money is always found from somewhere. Governors know the school well and are actively involved in its day-to-day life. They ask the right questions and play their part in forward planning. The school's contribution to its own and the local community's sense of identity and unity is outstanding. Not only is the school a harmonious working community where differences are respected, it is at the heart of the local community and has close links with businesses and the church. There is regular liaison with other schools to broaden curriculum provision, to develop awareness of social diversity, and to aid transition when pupils move on. The higher standards seen in mathematics and the improvements in guidance, show that the school has a good capacity to improve further.

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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?	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

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?	2
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	3
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	2
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	3

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	1
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	2
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1
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 learners' needs?	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1

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	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	1
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	1
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**

26 June 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Oswald's Church of England Primary School, Cumbria,

LA9 6QR

Thank you for the warm welcome I received when I inspected your school and the time many of you gave to talk to me. I enjoyed the two days I spent with you and was impressed by your hard work and good behaviour.

Yours is a good school because the care and support you receive are excellent and the work you are given to do is interesting and enjoyable. It is often linked to the local environment and your topic work covers many subjects so you can see the connections between them. It was a pleasure to look at the outstanding art work around the school and to read the memorable poetry you have written.

The progress you make in your work from Year 1 to Year 6 is good. Progress in the Reception Year is satisfactory. The difference is because some of the learning activities for the youngest children are not tightly organised and the classroom is not as colourful and stimulating as other rooms. I have asked the school to make improvements to these things.

I saw a lot of good learning taking place because your teachers and the assistants work hard to make it relevant to your everyday lives and give you lots of help to improve. You told me that you like the staff and that they are always there for you if you have problems. The staff told me how much they like working with you and that they are proud of all the things you achieve. In a few lessons better use could be made of time to help speed your learning and I have asked the school to look at this.

Your school is in a beautiful part of Cumbria and there is lots of space inside and in the grounds for you to work and play. You spoke to me about your enjoyment of the trips away and how interesting the talks are from visitors. I hope you will always be excited about finding things out about the world around you.

My best wishes to you all.

Yours faithfully

Brian Dower

Inspector