

Langdale CofE School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	112321
Local Authority	Cumbria
Inspection number	325576
Inspection date	27 November 2008
Reporting inspector	Steve Isherwood 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	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	32
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	Jonathon Philips
Headteacher	Mr Mark Squires
Date of previous school inspection	1 January 2006
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Chapel Stile Great Langdale Ambleside Cumbria LA22 9JE
Telephone number	01539 437204
Fax number	0

Age group	4–11
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Introduction

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

The inspectors evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues: pupils' achievement; the quality of teaching and learning; the accuracy of the school's self evaluation and the effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage. Evidence was gathered from the school's judgements about attainment on entry, test results, teachers' records, observations of teaching, scrutiny of pupils' current work and discussions with the headteacher, staff, pupils, governors and the local authority (LA). Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but the inspectors found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given in its self-evaluation, were not justified and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

Description of the school

Set in its own woodland, this smaller than average sized school is situated in the village of Chapel Stile on the Cumbrian fells. Pupils are drawn from a wide range of social backgrounds and all are of White British Heritage. The area served by the school is rural and isolated. A number of families live outside the immediate locality. There are no pupils who are entitled to a free school meal and a higher than average percentage have a learning difficulty and/or disability. The school has gained the 'Go4it' award which recognises the school's achievements in bringing risk and fun to everyday learning.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

As part of a recent 1940s project pupils from the school, dressed as evacuees, complete with name tags and balaclavas, arrived at the school one morning unsure of how the day would unfold. Hesitancy and uncertainty filled the air. Waving goodbye to their mums and dads, a period coach transported them down to the next hamlet where they were greeted by the local vicar and quickly herded into the village chapel. To recreate events of the time and without prior warning, the pupils were then dispersed to unknown families in unfamiliar surroundings and were encouraged to express their feelings in a postcard to their loved ones back home. This unforgettable experience, described by pupils as 'enjoyable but scary', goes to the heart of what makes Langdale a good school with some outstanding features.

Creative, innovative, exciting opportunities based securely on first-hand experiences that bring learning to life are central to the school's outstanding curriculum. As a consequence, pupils' achievements are good. They reach above average standards in their work and make exceptionally good progress in their personal development. They behave extremely well and are caring and considerate towards each others. Older pupils take good care of younger ones, relationships are very strong and pupils are confident in making decisions and showing initiative. They raise substantial funds for charities and develop a strong social conscience. They have an excellent awareness of the importance of maintaining a healthy lifestyle through regular exercise and a balanced diet. Pupils love their school and greatly enjoy their learning as demonstrated by their good attendance and by enthusiasm for the wide range of opportunities that the school provides. When asked to identify the best things about the school pupils emphasised that learning was fun with plenty of outdoor activities. As one child said, 'Everyday is a new adventure.'

Being a small school, teachers know the pupils and their families very well. This means that staff are highly aware of the needs of every child and are extremely caring and supportive in their response to each individual. All required checks and systems are in place to safeguard the pupils' health and well-being.

The school is well thought of in the local community and has forged outstanding partnerships with other schools and agencies. The school's promotion of community cohesion is good. Pupils' awareness of the diversity of British society and racial equalities is sensitively promoted in ways that are meaningful through special themes and links with other schools and pupils in different countries.

Parents, quite rightly hold the school and staff in high regard. One parent's view was typical of many, 'Since joining the school our child has returned home every day full of enthusiasm and excitement about her learning. We feel this speaks for itself.' Another commented, 'The school provides exceptional outdoor learning activities that give children the opportunity to really challenge themselves. It is hard to get my child home at the end of the school day.'

Pupils, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, come on in leaps and bounds from the moment they enter the school. By the time they leave in Year 6, the proportion of pupils reaching the level expected at age 11 is consistently above average in all core subjects. This represents good achievement considering their starting points. Nevertheless, the progress pupils make in mathematics is not as rapid as it is in English. This is because the level of challenge in some lessons is variable, which means that some pupils do not always achieve as well or as swiftly as they should.

A significant factor in pupils' good achievement is that teaching is good overall. Teaching assistants provide an effective layer of extra support, particularly for those pupils who find learning difficult. In the best lessons, pupils are encouraged to test and deepen their knowledge by taking responsibility and by discussing and sharing their ideas with others. Expectations are high, pupils are engrossed in their work and new learning builds well on their prior knowledge and understanding. For example, writing their own stories about being evacuated in 1940 was far more significant to pupils in the junior class because of their recent first-hand experiences. Where teaching is less successful, the checking of pupils' progress through the marking of their work lacks rigour and consistency. There are some good examples, particularly in writing where pupils are given clear guidance on how to improve their work and reach the next level with consultation and support. However, this is not yet consistent in mathematics and in other areas of pupils' work.

The success of the school is underpinned by good leadership and management. The headteacher sets the tone and works with energy and commitment to drive the school forward. He is passionate about maximising the potential of the 'whole-child' in a structured and stimulating environment where confidence and self-esteem are high on the agenda. He is well supported by an equally committed team of staff and the chair of governors, who share his vision and sense of purpose. As a group, they constantly seek ways of improving the school and are forward thinking and reflective. As a consequence, there is clear agreement on the strengths and weaknesses of the school and where further improvements are required. The school's rapid response to potential underachievement is a strong feature of its work. For example, senior leaders have correctly identified that the achievement of pupils in writing could be stronger and have implemented action to raise achievement further over the last year. These actions are now bearing fruit, with increasing numbers of pupils achieving more highly across the school.

Governors fulfil their statutory responsibilities and offer satisfactory support to the school at present. This is because the governing body is going through a period of change and transition. Several long standing and experienced members have left and vacancies have yet to be filled. As a result, the knowledge, skills and understanding of governors to support and challenge the school has been temporarily weakened.

Considering the advances made since its last inspection, along with its other strengths, the school has good capacity to improve further.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

The good provision gives children a good start and ensures that they achieve well. Parents are encouraged to be actively involved in their children's learning at all times and there are effective links with pre-school providers which enables teachers to settle children quickly into school routines. When children enter the school their skills and levels of learning vary considerably but overall are typical for their age. As a result of a warm, caring environment, good teaching and well planned activities children make good progress. By the time they start Year 1 many reach and often exceed the national goals for their age. Given their starting point, this represents good achievement. Whenever possible, children are taken outside to learn and the natural environment is seen as part of their classroom. They use the playground to learn about numbers and to develop an understanding of the world about them. Good use of educational visits, for example to Jonnie's Farm, successfully extends their knowledge and has a positive impact on their learning and achievement. Through their exploits as they play and learn outdoors, children enjoy their activities and have good levels of physical development. Whilst the curriculum

enables children to learn at a good rate, opportunities for them to take responsibility, work independently and make their own choices are less well developed.

What the school should do to improve further

- Accelerate pupils' progress further in mathematics
- Ensure greater consistency and rigour in the marking of pupils' work
- Increase the opportunities for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) to make choices and work more independently.

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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?	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	2
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?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	1
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	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?	1
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	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	2
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	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	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

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

Dear Children

Inspection of Langdale Cof E School, Cumbria, LA22 9JE

Thank you all very much for the friendly way in which you helped Mr. Byrne and myself when we visited your school recently. We really enjoyed chatting to you in lessons, in the playground and in the pupil interview. We learnt a great deal about your school. You expressed your opinions very clearly and they were very helpful to us. You told us how much you enjoy coming to school and having spent the day with you, we can understand why. You go to a good school with an excellent range of activities for you to take part in, particularly outdoors. It is such a happy and safe place to be. We were really pleased to see how well you behave at all times and how you help one another in class and around the school. We can see that the adults in school look after you really well, and your parents told us this too.

You told us about the all the exciting opportunities on offer and that every day is a new experience. We could see this for ourselves when you told us about how some of you swam across Lake Windermere, when some of you rowed out to Peel Island on Lake Coniston to picnic and when some of you had fun in the forest by catching bugs, making wind-flyers and eating around a camp fire. We know from reading your excellent newsletter 'The Langdale Express' how much you enjoyed caving, climbing and gorge scrambling at your residential visit at Gearstone Lodge. We were also impressed when we heard how some of you walked fifteen miles along the River Duddon from its source to the sea. What a great way to learn about the features of a river.

Mr Squires and all the staff work very hard to make the school as good as it can be and we are confident that it will continue to improve. To help with this we have asked them to ensure that some of you make faster progress in mathematics, that the youngest children in school are given more encouragement to make their own choices and that your teachers look more closely at your books to see how well you are learning. You can help by telling your teachers how well you have understood and being clear about how you can improve your work.

Keep trying hard. I wish you and your families all the best for the future.

Yours sincerely

Steve Isherwood

Her Majesty's Inspector