

Braithwaite Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School

Inspection report

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| Unique Reference Number | 112334 |
| Local Authority | Cumbria |
| Inspection number | 325582 |
| Inspection dates | 5–6 March 2009 |
| Reporting inspector | Judith Straw |

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.

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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 (total) | 103 |
| 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 Gail Gravett |
| Headteacher | Mrs Jo Laker |
| Date of previous school inspection | 1 May 2006 |
| Date of previous funded early education inspection | Not previously inspected |
| Date of previous childcare inspection | Not previously inspected |
| School address | Braithwaite Keswick Cumbria CA12 5TD |
| Telephone number | 01768 778356 |
| Fax number | 01768 778206 |

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|--------------------------|----------------|
| Age group | 3–11 |
| Inspection dates | 5–6 March 2009 |
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

This is a smaller-than-average school situated in a village. Pupils come from a range of social backgrounds and many travel some distance from the surrounding area. The great majority are of White British heritage. A very small number of pupils receive a free school meal. No pupils are at an early stage of learning English. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is lower than average.

The school has four mixed-age classes. Early Years Foundation Stage provision is provided in Class 1 where there are 14 children full time in Reception and 9 Nursery children join the class each afternoon. The headteacher has a teaching commitment as well as her management role.

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: 2

This is a good school which is at the centre of the local community. Christian values and respect for the individuality of every child are at the heart of what it is about. Parents rightly appreciate the school's many strengths. One parent, speaking for many, summed this up by writing, 'The school provides a warm, friendly, family environment that enables the children to make the best of their abilities as individuals'. The school is involved in a wide range of village activities and many parents play an active role in its day-to-day life. There is a sense of common purpose and the school gives considerable thought to the good contribution it makes to community cohesion through local links, national links with an inner-city school in Manchester and international links with schools in Sri Lanka, Ethiopia and China.

Achievement is good. Standards at the end of Year 2 have been consistently above average for several years and all pupils achieve well. Teachers' assessments in 2008 were above average in reading and mathematics and average in writing. Boys have recently done better than girls. At the end of Year 6, standards have been falling over the last three years and pupils' achievement overall was satisfactory, but this decline was halted in 2008. Unvalidated results of national tests showed standards in English, mathematics and science were above average. In English and science an above average number of pupils reached the higher Level 5. However, in mathematics this was not the case and more able pupils did not all achieve as well as expected. This is an improvement priority for the school. Overall, pupils' progress is good and current standards are above average.

Pupils' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is good. The pupils appreciate and value the beautiful natural environment in which they live. Behaviour is good. Pupils of all ages serve on the school council. Their confidence and above average skills ensure they are well prepared for the next stage of their education. Pupils of all ages say they feel safe and secure in school and that instances of bullying are rare. A minority of parents expressed concern about bullying but the pupils themselves expressed no worries and were confident that any issues were dealt with quickly and effectively. Pupils take plenty of exercise, eat sensibly and enjoy keeping fit.

Good outcomes in pupils' personal development and academic standards are the result of good teaching, a broad and exciting curriculum and an increasingly effective system for monitoring pupils' progress and helping them when they have difficulties. Lesson planning is good and learning activities are structured to meet the needs of all in the mixed-age classes. Inspection evidence found that in most lessons pupils are being challenged although just occasionally this is not the case in mathematics.

Leadership, management and governance are good. The headteacher's vision for the school, her sense of purpose and her high expectations have halted the decline in Key Stage 2. There is a strong sense of teamwork among all the staff. All the adults in school are committed to bringing about improvements wherever possible. Subject leadership is good but leaders require more support to help them to take an active part in monitoring the standards and achievement across the school. Governors are knowledgeable and involved in day-to-day activities. They play their part in forward planning and as critical friends. The school has an accurate picture of how well it is doing and has set accurate priorities to improve further.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

The Early Years Foundation Stage provides children with a good start to their education. Currently, children's skills and knowledge on entry to Nursery are in line with what is typical for their age. They settle quickly because of the good induction programme and soon feel safe, secure and cared for. The school works exceptionally well with parents who appreciate the warm and welcoming atmosphere in which their children thrive. As a result of good provision for their learning and development, they make good progress and achieve well. By the time they leave the Reception year, they attain at least average standards and many have skills slightly higher than those expected on entry to Year 1. The positive relationships that exist in school ensure that children are happy, enjoy their learning and quickly grow in confidence and independence. Observations of how well children are doing are used appropriately to plan future learning opportunities including the matching of activities to children's interests.

There is an appropriate balance between teacher-directed learning and opportunities for children to explore and find out things for themselves. Every afternoon at 'snack time' children sit together at tables, share a healthy snack and talk about their day. Children have opportunities to learn outdoors in a well equipped area but currently the children do not have easy access to this area. The school plans to change this situation after new building work expected to start next year. The leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage are good. Systems to secure the safety and well-being of children are robust.

What the school should do to improve further

- Sustain the recent improvement in standards and achievement in Key Stage 2 and ensure that more able pupils reach the higher levels especially in mathematics.
- Further develop the skills of subject leaders to empower them to take a leading role in monitoring and evaluating standards and achievement across the school.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Standards are above average and achievement is good. When pupils enter Year 1, most have met the early learning goals set for them and some have exceeded them. Teacher assessments at the end of Year 2 show standards are consistently above average and pupils achieve well. In 2008, pupils reached above average standards in reading and mathematics and average standards in writing. Current standards are above average. Boys have recently done better than girls and the school is developing a range of strategies to address this imbalance.

The results of national tests at the end of Key Stage 2 have been on a downward trend in recent years and standards were average. The school's improved tracking system identified underachievement in 2008 and a range of measures was put in place to improve the situation. These included more support for pupils when it was noted they were lagging behind others. As a result, the downward trend was halted. Standards rose considerably in 2008 and the unvalidated test results were above average in English, science and mathematics. In science, results were exceptionally high with every pupil reaching the expected level and 70% reaching the higher Level 5. The vast majority of pupils reached at least the expected Level 4 in mathematics, but more able pupils performed less well with few reaching the higher Level 5. Nevertheless, these results represent good achievement for these pupils from their starting points in Year 1. Inspection evidence, supported by the school's own tracking data, shows that

current Year 6 pupils make good progress and are on track to meet, and for some to exceed, the challenging targets set for them.

Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities achieve well, relative to their starting points, because the school tracks their progress carefully and provides targeted intervention to support in specific areas where pupils are less secure.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' personal development, including their spiritual, social, moral and cultural development is good. Pupils enjoy school and thrive in the secure, safe and happy family atmosphere, underpinned by shared Christian values, that is promoted by all the adults who work in the school. Attendance is average. Pupils are eager to enjoy all the varied activities that the school offers and establish good habits for the future in embracing a philosophy of healthy living through a good diet and regular exercise. Pupils have a sensitive awareness of others' needs and, through the extensive and wide-ranging links that school has with other faiths and cultures are well informed about the lives and beliefs of people across the world. They raise money for a wide range of local and international charities and support Fair Trade. Pupils collaborate very well with each other and are keen to take on responsibilities within school. A happy community atmosphere pervades the school. The school council provides a forum for pupils to express their views and be consulted about developments. Pupils say that they feel safe and secure in school and enjoy all that it has to offer. Pupils have no fears about bullying which, they say, is dealt with quickly and effectively. Their above average standards, strong personal development and self-confidence ensures that pupils are well prepared for the next stage in their education.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The quality of teaching and learning is good. A strong commitment to capturing pupils' interest and good use of information and communication technology (ICT) stimulates them to work hard and sustain their concentration. Pupils are eager learners. Teachers have good subject knowledge, and usually plan lessons to provide challenge for all. They use the good relationships they have with pupils to manage behaviour well. Standards in writing are improving because of the very successful implementation of a new approach to writing across the school. Pupils' enjoyment was evident during the inspection when Year 5 and 6 pupils produced truly lyrical writing during a lesson on Hiawatha. Just occasionally, mixed-age class arrangements can slow the pace down and sometimes, expectations are not high enough, especially for the more able pupils in mathematics.

Assessment is good. Pupils' work is marked thoroughly with helpful comments. All pupils are set targets in the core subjects. Pupils know their targets and refer to them often. Well briefed and experienced teaching assistants help small groups of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities so that they achieve as well as other pupils.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum has been reorganised and re-modelled to provide more creativity and fun by moving to a topic-based system which allows for greater flexibility. One parent described this as 'a rich curriculum with unparalleled opportunities for trips and visits, plenty of after-school clubs and a positive inclusive ethos'. Themed units, such as the recent science week, bring learning to life for pupils and help them to make links between subjects and extend their writing and ICT skills. The curriculum promotes pupils' personal, health and emotional development as well as their academic skills. Educational visits, visitors, links with other local primary and secondary schools, have a positive impact on pupils' understanding and appreciation of other lives and bring the wider world into the classroom. This is a school that embraces pupils of all abilities, backgrounds and ethnicity and, with the exception of a small number of more able pupils in mathematics, provides well for their individual needs.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The school provides good quality care, support and guidance. Pupils speak of their trust in staff and that they are well looked after. Most parents praise the school's high levels of care although a minority express concern about the new playing field area and the level of adult supervision at lunchtime. The school has increased the staffing level for playtime and the children are confident that they are well looked after. Staff support for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, including liaison with outside agencies and parents is good. Child protection and all safeguarding arrangements meet statutory requirements. There are vigorous procedures to ensure pupils' health and safety. Procedures to promote good attendance are robust, but inclement weather can have an affect on attendance in the winter months. Good arrangements are in place to help pupils make a smooth transition from class to class and from primary to secondary school. Pupils' progress is tracked robustly and the school has a good range of intervention strategies to help anyone in danger of underachieving, although more able pupils do not consistently receive sufficient advice on how to achieve at the highest levels in mathematics.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher is working closely with the deputy headteacher and others to ensure that all staff understand what areas need to be developed and are guided about how to bring about improvement. There is a strong sense of teamwork and all staff feel consulted and involved. A much improved tracking system has been implemented which has sharpened teachers' awareness of pupils' progress. As a result, relative weaknesses are pinpointed and action taken. This has been effective in raising standards in Key Stage 2. The management of subjects is good. Although subject leaders are beginning to have more responsibilities for monitoring standards and provision there is not enough support to ensure consistency of practice, so that all staff can be better informed about overall standards and achievement. The school runs smoothly and financial management is good. Governors have a very good understanding of the school, amply fulfil their role as critical friend and are ambitious for the school to do even better. Improvement since the last inspection is good. The decline in

standards and achievement in Key Stage 2 has been reversed and the school is well placed to move forward.

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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

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| 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? | 2 |
| The capacity to make any necessary improvements | 2 |

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

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| 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

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|--|---|
| 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

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|---|---|
| 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 | 2 |
| The extent to which learners adopt safe practices | 2 |
| The extent to which learners enjoy their education | 2 |
| The attendance of learners | 3 |
| 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

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| 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 | 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**

9 March 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Braithwaite CofE VA Primary School, Cumbria, CA12 5TD

Thank you for making me so welcome when I visited you in school last week. I enjoyed my time with you and especially enjoyed your wonderful singing in assembly. I was pleased to be able to talk to so many of you and hear your views about school. Please thank your parents for taking the time to respond to the questionnaire.

Braithwaite is a good school. You make good progress in your work and reach above average standards by the time you leave. You have the personal qualities to be successful in life and the skills and knowledge to make the most of the next stage of your education. I was particularly impressed by how well you get on together and your concern for those less fortunate than yourselves. The way in which you work with and contribute to your local community is good. Many of you told me that you like school very much and appreciate the wide range of activities in which you can join.

You enjoy your lessons because the teachers make learning fun and give you opportunities to go on many interesting visits and welcome visitors into school.

All the adults in school work hard to make sure you are safe and well cared for.

There are two areas I have asked the school to concentrate on to bring about improvements. First, to make sure more of you reach the higher levels in mathematics and, second, to ensure all the teachers play a part in tracking your progress to check that you are doing as well as you can. You can play your part by attending regularly and working hard, as well as enjoying yourselves.

My best wishes to you all. I hope this academic year is a successful one for every pupil.

Yours faithfully

Judith Straw

Lead inspector