

Dean Church of England School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	112336
Local Authority	Cumbria
Inspection number	325583
Inspection dates	18–19 May 2009
Reporting inspector	Joe Clark

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)	98
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 Dave Hammond
Headteacher	Mr Nicholas Fish
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	Dean Workington Cumbria CA14 4TH
Telephone number	01946 861408
Fax number	01946 861408

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an additional inspector.

Description of the school

This is a small rural school with slightly more boys than girls. Most pupils are from White British backgrounds and all speak English as their first language. The proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals is well below average, as is the proportion with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Pupils attend the school from a wide geographical area; most come from areas of above average social and economic circumstances. Most children who enter the school in the Reception Year have attended Dean Pre-school and Family Group. The school provides after-school care which is managed by an external agency and did not form a part of this inspection.

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 that gives good value for money. Parents are overwhelmingly supportive of what the school provides for their children. 'I feel that Dean is an excellent school providing a wide variety of learning experiences and a high level of care for the children' was typical of parents' comments. Pupils' personal development is good. Relationships between pupils and adults, and with each other, are very supportive and help raise pupils' self-confidence and self-esteem. While their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good overall, their spiritual development, enhanced by links with the local church and fostered effectively in school assemblies, is excellent. The school prayer, written by a class of older pupils, aptly reflects the school's strong Christian ethos and values. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are good. Their enjoyment of school is outstanding. They take on responsibilities eagerly and fulfil them conscientiously. Their attendance is good. They know how to stay safe and their understanding of what constitutes a healthy lifestyle is excellent. They make a good contribution to the local community, especially the church community. They feel safe and are well supported both in their academic work and in their personal development. They feel safe because the school takes good care of them, fulfilling its mission statement 'To provide the best possible education for all the children within a secure, supportive and safe environment'. Safeguarding systems comply with recent legislation. Links with other agencies are good and effectively support pupils' learning.

In their academic work, pupils attain high standards and achieve well. They join Year 1 with broadly average levels of attainment. They make good progress and generally leave at the end of Year 6 with standards that are above, and often well above average. Pupils are currently making good progress. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make the same good progress as other pupils. More able pupils do not always gain the higher level grades in national tests and assessments they are capable of, especially in reading at the end of Key Stage 1, and mathematics and science at the end of Key Stage 2.

Pupils achieve well because teaching and learning are good, the curriculum is well matched to their needs and they bring good attitudes to their work. Teachers take great care to plan activities which they think will interest and excite pupils; who told the inspector that they enjoyed their lessons. Much of the teaching is enthusiastic and energetic and motivates pupils to want to learn more. Occasionally the more able pupils are not challenged enough and find the work too easy. In the Early Years Foundation Stage there is no designated outdoor play area. This has a negative impact on provision which in turn hampers children's progress.

The school is effectively led and managed. The headteacher is very popular with pupils and parents and provides the inspiration for the maintenance of high standards. Governance is outstanding. A significant minority of governors actively support pupils' learning through putting their expertise, for example, in mathematics or sport at the service of the school. Community cohesion is proving effective, particularly at local level where there are good links with the local community. There has been good improvement since the previous inspection and there is good capacity to improve further.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 3

The Early Years Foundation Stage is a mixed Reception and Year 1 class. Provision is satisfactory. Children enter Reception with levels of skill and understanding that are typical for their age. This can vary from year to year because of small numbers. Recently, speaking and listening skills, especially in linking sounds and letters, have not been as well developed as personal and social skills, which are strong. Children's progress is satisfactory and they enter Year 1 at a broadly average level. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. The absence of a dedicated and resourced outdoor play area denies opportunities for children to actively learn and play outside of the classroom environment. Inside the small classroom there are restricted opportunities for creative development, for example, through role-play, or for child-initiated activities. Formal lessons effectively support the development of phonics and number work through skilful teaching but sometimes children spend too much time sitting on the carpet leading to restlessness and some inattention. Within these constraints, which limit pupils' achievement, the leadership and management of the provision are satisfactory. Welfare arrangements are satisfactory. The pastoral care of the children is well supported by good relationships. Personal development is satisfactory. 'Golden Rules' are introduced and established from the outset, reinforced regularly and referred to by adults and children when appropriate. Children behave well and are keen to learn. They settle in well because of strong parental involvement and good liaison with the local pre-school provision.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve provision and outcomes in the Early Years Foundation Stage including a designated outdoor play area to provide children with opportunities to learn through play.
- Provide greater challenge in lessons for more able pupils to ensure they achieve higher grades in national tests and assessments, especially in reading at the end of Key Stage 1, and mathematics and science at the end of Key Stage 2.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Standards on entry to Year 1 can vary enormously depending on the size of the cohort but more often than not, they are broadly average. By the time pupils leave school at the end of Year 6, standards are generally above and occasionally well above average and achievement is good. In the 2008 national tests at the end of Key Stage 2, results were above average with all pupils gaining or exceeding the expected level for their age. Given their starting points, pupils achieved well. However, in mathematics and science, more able pupils did not achieve the higher level grades they were capable of. In teacher assessments at the end of Key Stage 1 in 2008, standards were average, reflecting pupils' weaker attainment when they joined Year 1. Although standards in writing were above average, too few pupils gained the higher level grades in reading. Evidence from the inspection indicates that pupils throughout the school are currently making good progress and are on track to achieve the challenging targets set for them in this summer's external examinations.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' personal development, including their moral, social and cultural development is good. Assemblies and links with St Oswald's church provide good support for their spiritual development, which is outstanding. Behaviour is good. Exclusions are practically unheard of. Pupils say there is no bullying. As one Year 6 girl put it, 'We don't do bullying here'. Pupils appreciate that one or two pupils in the school have emotional and behavioural difficulties but that others are very tolerant and understanding of their needs. Attitudes to learning are good and pupils enjoy coming to school. Attendance is good. Pupils have good opportunities to take on responsibility and exercise leadership skills as school councillors or monitors of various kinds. Links with the local community are good, especially the church community. The school has a healthy school award and the Activemark award and pupils talk knowledgeably about the need for healthy eating and taking regular exercise. They know how to keep safe, including Internet safety when messaging on-line. They leave school with above average basic skills and good social skills, which is a good preparation for the next stage of learning.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are good. Teachers provide pupils with interesting and exciting activities. Teaching is often enthusiastic and full of life and when this is the case pupils really enjoy their learning; pupils said they enjoyed their lessons because they were 'fun'. Relationships are good and motivate pupils to want to learn. Pupils with challenging behaviour are well managed. Teachers receive good support from a strong team of classroom assistants who are effective in helping teachers meet the needs and challenges posed by mixed-age classes. Planning to meet these needs, and those of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, is generally good, but occasionally the work does not provide sufficient challenge for the more able pupils. Information and communication technology (ICT) is used well to support pupils' learning across most subjects. Marking is regular and encouraging but does not always identify what it is that pupils need to do to improve their work.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is well matched to most pupils' needs, but less so to the most able pupils than to others, which contributes to fewer of them than expected reaching a higher level, particularly in mathematics and science. Good curriculum links exist with the local secondary school where pupils identified as able, gifted or talented, attend for lessons in mathematics, ICT and physical education. A reasonable range of lunchtime and after-school clubs support pupils' learning. The curriculum is further enhanced by educational visits, including alternating annual residential activities in outdoor pursuits to raise self-esteem, and urban activities to promote understanding of diversity and equality. Visitors to the school include artists and sports coaches and visits from the Cocker mouth Mountain Rescue team. Themed events such as Mexican and Indian days extend pupils' knowledge and understanding of other places, cultures and beliefs. Provision for children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is good.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Pupils are well cared for, guided and supported both personally and in their academic work. They have very positive views about the school and feel they are well looked after. Procedures for safeguarding pupils are in place, understood by all staff and put into practice to protect the most vulnerable. Systems are in place to deal with occasional instances of unacceptable behaviour from a tiny minority of pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties. Pupils know what their curriculum targets are and what they need to do to improve their work. The support for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is good. Support for more able pupils, through planned intervention, while relatively recent, is developing. The school works effectively with parents and other agencies to support pupils' progress.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

This is a successful school because it is well led and managed. The headteacher provides inspirational leadership. Pupils say they enjoy school so much because, although demands are made of them, school life is made enjoyable. Staff provide excellent role models for pupils. Systems of self-evaluation are accurate and effective in leading to school improvement. Monitoring by subject leaders is developing well but would be more secure if planning was included more formally as part of the whole school monitoring cycle. New tracking systems are effective in identifying underachievement leading to appropriate intervention strategies. School targets are regularly met. Community cohesion is good, both locally and globally, including links with a community in El Salvador. Governance is outstanding. Governors are actively involved in the monitoring, assessment and improvement cycle, as well as actively supporting pupils' learning, particularly in mathematics and physical education. Safeguarding arrangements are secure. Links with the local community are good, for example, through the parish council and Rotary club, four of whose members come into school every week to help with reading.

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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?	2
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?	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?	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?	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	1
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	1
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	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	1
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 Pupils

Inspection of Dean CofE School, Cumbria, CA14 4TH

Thank you so much for the very warm welcome you gave me when I inspected your school recently. It was fun talking to you and hearing the interesting and exciting things you told me about your school. I really enjoyed your 'Move It' activities expertly led by pupils from different classes. Also I enjoyed the assembly where I could tell you were desperate for your headteacher to spill that water!

I think yours is a good school where everyone gets on well together. The behaviour and attitudes of the vast majority of you are good. You make a good contribution to the running of the school and enjoy being school councillors or monitors.

You make good progress and reach high standards in your work because you are well taught. You told me how much you enjoyed your lessons though some of you with the most ability sometimes find the work too easy. I think this group of more able pupils could be challenged more in lessons in order to achieve better results in their national tests.

It was good to hear you tell me how much you enjoyed the wide range of exciting trips and activities the school organises for you, especially in sport.

Those of you in Class 1 get on well with each other and with your teachers and other adults. I think you would learn more if you had an outdoor play area.

Of course, none of these good things would be possible were it not for the good leadership and management of the school which ensures the school takes good care of you, keeping you safe and secure. You told me how hard your headteacher works to make school interesting and enjoyable.

These are the things the school is going to try to do to help you achieve even more.

- Provide an outdoor play area for Class 1 to help you in your learning and development.
- Give harder work to the more able pupils in lessons to help them achieve higher levels in their national tests and assessments.

So well done and keep up the good work.

Thank you once again for all your help and good luck for the future.

Joe Clark

Lead inspector