

Penny Bridge Church of England School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	112360
Local Authority	Cumbria
Inspection number	325588
Inspection dates	15–16 June 2009
Reporting inspector	Lynne Read

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)	85
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	Reverend Gary Wemyss
Headteacher	Ms Lynn Smolinski
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	Mount Pleasant Greenodd Ulverston Cumbria LA12 7RQ

Age group	4–11
Inspection dates	15–16 June 2009
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an additional inspector.

Description of the school

This small school serves pupils from the villages of Greenodd and Penny Bridge, as well as the wider rural area. Pupils come from a varied range of backgrounds and almost all are of White British heritage. The take-up of free school meals is below average. An above average proportion of pupils have learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The Early Years Foundation Stage consists of a Reception class which, at the time of the inspection, was using part of the hall as a temporary classroom due to building works. Pupils in Key Stage 1 and 2 are taught in mixed-age classes. A private provider offers pre-school nursery places on site which was inspected separately by Ofsted. A group of parents organise an after-school care club which is not required to register with Ofsted because sessions run for less than two hours.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Penny Bridge Church of England Primary is a good school with outstanding features. It provides good value for money. Parents praise the quality of teaching and are pleased with the progress their children make and the 'excellent range of activities'. Families appreciate the good standard of childcare provided through the independently run after-school club. Excellent links with the church, other schools and agencies provide many benefits for pupils' education. For example, pupils take responsibility for taking the readings and prayers at church services, and links with secondary schools provide sporting events and workshops for gifted and talented pupils. Attendance at local and national festivals enables pupils to compete in the creative arts, with some notable successes.

By the end of Year 6 standards are well above average. From a level of skills typical for their age when they start, achievement is good in the Reception class and Key Stage 1. It is often rapid in Years 5 and 6 but has been slower than expected in Years 3 and 4. The school has taken action to address the problem. Currently, progress is good and pupils are well on the way to making up for the shortfalls in their previous learning, although managers know there is still some way to go. The school is highly effective in supporting pupils who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities. With special teaching programmes and personalised learning, these pupils do very well from their starting points and often reach national expectations by Year 6.

Teaching is good and there is some outstanding practice. Across the school, lessons challenge pupils' thinking, providing good opportunities for them to be active, enthusiastic learners. However, a scrutiny of books shows that expectations have not been consistently high enough in the past to ensure that pupils in Years 3 and 4 achieve their best. Because management took swift action, teaching and learning in these years is now good. The outstanding curriculum provides an excellent all-round education and has a very strong emphasis on creative and practical activities. As a result, standards in subjects such as music or dance are above average and pupils take great delight in their gardening and 'forest schools' work. Learning includes an excellent emphasis on personal, social and health education. Pupils are proud of their Healthy Schools Award that recognises the very good work done to help them live safe and healthy lives. An outstanding selection of visits, visitors and out-of-school clubs inspires pupils and extends their horizons beyond the school.

Personal development, including behaviour, is outstanding and supported by an excellent system of pastoral care. The school provides an extremely safe, nurturing environment and pupils say they enjoy learning. Pupils make an excellent contribution to the school community. For example, the school council is involved in decision making and pupils' work on environmental issues has resulted in the recent Eco bronze award. Pupils leave the school as confident and mature individuals, with good academic skills that prepare them well for the next stage of their education.

The headteacher provides good, determined leadership and, in the short time since her appointment, has implemented many changes that have improved provision and raised standards. She has the confidence of staff, governors and pupils alike. The key issues from the previous inspection have been successfully addressed and there is good capacity for the school to improve further.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children in the Reception class benefit from good teaching and learning. The good promotion of children's welfare and close relationships with the pre-school playgroup and other nurseries ensure that children settle quickly and their needs are accurately assessed. This assessment continues throughout Reception and enables staff to provide very effectively for the interests and abilities of all children. As a result, children enjoy their work; their behaviour and personal skills are excellent. Parents are kept well informed about the progress their children make through the detailed learning journals that are sent home regularly.

Children's development at entry to the Reception class is broadly typical for this age. Lessons take account of children's interests to keep them well motivated and they include a good element of free-choice activities to develop independence. Children benefit from the very small class size and have very good support from adults. They also learn a great deal from working in groups alongside Key Stage 1 pupils in the afternoons, especially in communication and collaborative skills. Children make good progress. The vast majority are working at or above expected levels by the time they enter Year 1. Management is good. The temporary classroom has been imaginatively developed to provide a stimulating environment and learning is extended to the outdoors. Staff are well led and work very effectively as a team. They have exciting plans to develop their outdoor curriculum further, once the building work is completed.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that the improvements in progress in Years 3 and 4 are sustained so there is a consistent pattern of good achievement across Key Stage 2.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils' achievement is good and standards overall are well above average by Year 6. In mathematics, they are significantly above average. Attainment on entry to Year 1 is at least average in all areas and sometimes higher than this in early reading, writing and number work. Progress is good in Key Stage 1 and the teacher assessments for Year 2 pupils are above average. Spelling and writing skills are significantly above average, largely due to an increased emphasis on learning about sounds and letters.

Progress across Key Stage 2 is good overall but there are variations between classes. It is sometimes outstanding in Years 5 and 6. Using frequent assessments of pupils' progress, teachers plan work to promote progress at a good rate. The system works extremely well in most classes. However, the school's tracking records shows that, in the past, pupils in Years 3 and 4 have not made expected progress. A recent accelerated programme of teaching has helped to boost learning for these pupils. They are now making good progress and are well on the way to making up for shortfalls in their previous learning. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities have good support and many of these pupils make very good progress. A focus on boys' writing has helped to improve their progress and they now achieve as well as the girls.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

This is outstanding, along with spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. They are effectively encouraged through close links with the church and an excellent programme for personal and social education. Pupils show a real enthusiasm for learning and thoroughly enjoy school. This is reflected in the school's above average attendance and the school does everything it can to discourage unnecessary absences.

School is a very friendly place, where staff are approachable and relationships are excellent. Pupils are eager to extend their learning and take good advantage of the very interesting range of after-school clubs. They have an excellent understanding of healthy lifestyles and have achieved the Healthy School Award. They are well informed about potential dangers in life, such as substance misuse, and know how to use the Internet safely. Behaviour is exemplary. Pupils assert that there is no bullying in school and they feel safe. Pupils express their opinions extremely clearly, notably through the school council. They are keen to take on responsibilities around school, for example, as playleaders they ensure that breaktimes are happy occasions. These factors, along with the good acquisition of basic skills, prepares pupils well for the next stage of their education.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching is good with some outstanding practice. Pupils benefit from an inventive way of teaching the basic skills. This uses the considerable talents of both teachers and teaching assistants to create small teaching groups where the pace and level of learning is accurately tailored to meet pupils' needs. Staff are very effective in questioning and in encouraging discussion. Lessons often include games, challenges or practical tasks that motivate pupils well and help to develop thinking skills. Teachers provide good encouragement and help for pupils during lessons. Marking is often excellent. It clearly indicates what pupils have done well and where they need to improve. There are some good examples of pupils evaluating their own and others' work and making suggestions for improvement. This is developing very good skills of independent learning and is now being extended further across school. Pupils who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities have good support with tasks finely tuned to build on previous learning. This helps pupils to succeed and grow in confidence.

The school's good system for monitoring teaching highlighted a lack of challenge in some lessons for pupils in Years 3 and 4. The school acted on the issue. Lessons observed during the inspection and pupils' books show good, and sometimes outstanding, teaching and learning for these year groups. This is enabling pupils to catch up quickly but the school recognises that there is still some ground to cover.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

Careful planning keeps enjoyment at the heart of learning and results in a balanced and exciting curriculum which meets the needs of the mixed-age classes extremely well. It includes French lessons and an excellent emphasis on creative work. Pupils contribute to the planning of lessons so learning meets their interests and answers their questions. The rich local environment is

used to best advantage. For example, pupils use their outdoor classroom when investigating wildlife and make regular visits to local woods for their 'forest schools' projects. A further strength of the curriculum lies in the intervention groups that are very successful in catering for individual learning needs. The excellent programme of personal development work is linked to worship themes and integrated with other subjects such as science or religious education. Excellent opportunities for physical exercise and sport are recognised through the Activemark award.

Enrichment for learning is excellent. Interesting visits, visitors and special theme weeks are highlights of the curriculum. A good variety of after-school activities are well attended and described as 'good fun'. They make a major contribution to pupils' developing skills and talents and also encourage them to take up new interests.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Guidance to help pupils with their learning is good. The school tracks progress closely so teachers are able to identify the next steps for learning and set challenging targets. These are translated into success criteria for pupils in every lesson so they understand what is expected of them. Individual guidance for pupils is very good in writing and clearly explains how they can improve. In mathematics the guidance is less detailed and this is an area that staff have rightly identified for further improvement.

The school takes excellent care of its pupils and their welfare is at the heart of its work. Excellent links with pre-school providers and the local secondary school ensure pupils have a happy introduction to school life and a smooth transition to the next phase of learning. Arrangements for safeguarding pupils, including those for child protection, meet requirements fully. Supervision is good at all times. The school goes to great lengths to provide resources and expert support for pupils with learning difficulties so they do very well and have high levels of self-esteem.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good and very firmly focused on high achievement and maintaining the school's very supportive ethos. Staff and pupils have constant regard for the school motto which is 'sowing the seeds of success'. The headteacher is a very strong leader, communicating her vision for the school clearly and successfully motivating and developing staff. Governors and staff constantly strive to provide the best for pupils. They work hard to ensure that different groups of pupils such as boys and girls or the different ability groups, have full and equal access to all that the school offers.

The school is well run; procedures and policies are consistently followed. A strong emphasis on teamwork means that management tasks are often a collaborative exercise. This leads to good sharing of expertise and experience. As a result, excellent systems are in place for critically evaluating the work of the school and to plan improvements. These include regular observations of lessons, checking the quality of pupils' work and tracking their progress very closely. The school welcomes all and plans well to promote good community cohesion. Pupils play a full part in the life of the local community and joined local residents recently to help 'save the local post office'. They have a good awareness of global issues through their work in sponsoring a child overseas.

Governance is good and all statutory requirements are met. Governors are well informed and they bring a wide range of skills to enhance management. The new review committee is now ensuring governors keep a very close eye on pupils' standards and achievement. Members are now working on developing a more active approach to monitoring the success of school development planning.

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
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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?	1
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	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	1
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**

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Penny Bridge Church of England School, Cumbria, LA12 7RQ

Thank you for the very warm welcome you gave me when I inspected your school. I thoroughly enjoyed my time with you and appreciated all the help you gave me. In return, I would like to tell you what I found out.

Penny Bridge is a good school and has some outstanding features. I was very impressed with your excellent behaviour. You get on extremely well together and take very good care of each other. You are a credit to your families and your school. Your council members ensure that your views are known. I know how much you enjoy your new play, gardening and wild areas as well as learning in your outdoor 'twigloo' classroom. I think your fundraising work shows that you are growing into thoughtful citizens and I'm sure that the people overseas who receive the profits from your healthy tuck shop are grateful for your help.

The school is a safe and happy place. Please thank your parents for sending lots of replies to the questionnaire. They are very pleased with the school and especially like all the interesting things you do, such as growing vegetables and playing in the school orchestra.

You are keen to learn, work hard and are making good progress. Those of you in the Reception class are learning quickly and doing some excellent work in the school allotment. In Years 1 to 6 you are making good progress overall and have worked hard to improve your writing. Well done! Some of you in Years 3 and 4 class did not do as well as expected at the start of the year but you are catching up nicely now. I have asked your teachers to make sure that these improvements continue. Your headteacher, staff and governors make a very strong team. They work well together and have helped improve your learning, the school building and its grounds. They are always trying to make improvements because they want you to have the best possible education.

Thank you once again for the interesting conversations I had and for letting me share your work and play. Please accept my best wishes for the future.

Yours faithfully

Mrs Lynne Read

Lead inspector