

Grassington Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	121563
Local Authority	North Yorkshire
Inspection number	327515
Inspection dates	14–15 January 2009
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 controlled
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	51
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 Joe Fattorini
Headteacher	Mrs H Clayton
Date of previous school inspection	3 May 2006
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Acre Lane Grassington Skipton North Yorkshire BD23 5LB
Telephone number	01756 752365

Age group	4–11
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Introduction

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

Description of the school

This smaller than average school serves the rural community of Upper Wharfedale in the Yorkshire Dales. Pupils are drawn from a wide range of social backgrounds. The vast majority are of White British heritage with a small number from minority ethnic groups. A number of families live outside the immediate locality. A lower proportion of pupils than average is entitled to a free school meal and a higher than average percentage has a learning difficulty and/or disability. The school has gained several awards including the Healthy Schools status, the International School award, the Eco School award and the local authority Inclusion Mark. In addition, the school is working towards Fair Trade status in 2009. When children start school many have skills typical for their age, although the intake covers a wide range of ability and varies from year to year.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

'Sit up straight, no talking and call me Ma'am: Discipline! That's what's needed'. As part of a recent history project pupils from the school, dressed in period costume were able to experience the harsh realities of life in a Victorian classroom for themselves whilst visiting a local workhouse museum. This unforgettable experience, described by pupils as 'great fun' goes to the heart of what makes Grassington a good and successful school with several outstanding features.

Exciting opportunities based securely on first-hand experiences that bring learning to life and fire pupils' enthusiasm are central to the school's outstanding enrichment of the good curriculum. As a result, pupils' achievements are good. They reach above average standards in their work and make exceptionally good progress in their personal development. This is a school with a strong family feel and a caring Christian ethos, where every child is valued and encouraged to grow in confidence and self-esteem. Relationships are highly effective; pupils behave extremely well and mature into well-rounded and thoughtful young people with clear values of honesty, respect and tolerance. Older pupils take good care of younger ones and, through the school council, they make a positive difference to school life by making decisions and showing initiative. Pupils love their school and greatly enjoy their learning as demonstrated by their good attendance and by their enthusiasm for the wide range of opportunities that the school provides. When asked to express their feelings about the school they found it very difficult to think of any improvements that they would like to see. There was strong praise for the high levels of care they receive from their teachers and the friendly atmosphere that prevails. As one child said, 'Everybody knows each other well; we get to be friends with everyone.'

The school is very well thought of in the local community and there are outstanding partnerships with other small schools and local agencies. The school's promotion of community cohesion is highly effective. Parents, quite rightly, hold the school in high regard. One parent's view was typical of many: 'My child has made friends with everyone and goes off to school each morning with a smile on his face.' Another commented: 'If I ever need to see a teacher about a concern, they are always approachable, warm and helpful.'

Children come on in leaps and bounds from the moment they enter the school. By the time they leave in Year 6, the proportion reaching the expected level at age 11 is above the national average in all core subjects. This represents good progress considering their starting points. A significant factor in this good achievement is that teaching is good overall with some outstanding features. In the highly successful lessons, the range of teaching styles allows pupils to flourish. A variety of challenging and stimulating activities encourage pupils to think about how they learn and to devise different ways to tackle their work. School leaders are not complacent and correctly realise that to enhance the quality of learning further across the school, the profile of consistently good teaching needs to rise to an even higher degree by sharing the excellent practice that exists.

The good quality of leadership at all levels is spearheaded by the headteacher who establishes a clear direction for the school. She cares deeply about every child and speaks with pride and emotion when discussing their qualities. The strengths identified at the previous inspection have been built upon very effectively through continuous improvement and rigorous self-evaluation. This means that the agenda for improving the school is crystal clear. For example, senior leaders are well aware that academic guidance to help pupils improve their work through teachers' marking is variable and lacks a consistent approach across the school.

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

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) is delivered in a joint Reception, Year 1 and Year 2 class. The good provision gives children a good start and enables children of all abilities to make good progress across all areas of learning. At the start of Reception, the majority of pupils are working within the expected levels for their age, although individual starting points vary within a range. The warm, caring ethos that prevails creates a positive climate for learning where children settle quickly and feel secure. As a consequence, children become absorbed in their learning through play and have the confidence to initiate activities for themselves as well as follow clearly established day-to-day routines. Learning activities are well targeted on key learning goals that match well with their stages of development. Teaching is purposeful, questions challenge children's thinking and practical learning is supported well. For example, in one session children made good progress in their literacy skills by writing their names in wet sand. Elsewhere, children had the opportunity to paint a picture of the Great Fire of London by using a computer programme. In contrast, during a recent study of autumn, children were able to explore and investigate the changing world around them. As one child noted, 'this leaf is yellow, sometimes they are green.'

Leadership is good and ensures children's welfare needs are effectively met. Staff work well as a team and continually assess how well children are achieving to plan further challenges. Parents are kept well informed and are encouraged to become actively involved in their children's learning. Effective arrangements ensure a smooth transition for children from nursery settings into the Reception year and on transfer into Year 1.

What the school should do to improve further

- Share the excellent practice that exists to improve the quality of teaching and learning from consistently good to outstanding.
- Ensure a greater consistency in the quality of teachers' marking to help pupils improve their work.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Standards tend to fluctuate year-on-year because of the small numbers of pupils involved and the different composition of each year group. Nevertheless, pupils' current work, as well as the provisional tests results for 2008, show standards are above average and pupils' achievement is good. The good provision in the EYFS ensures that children settle quickly and make great strides in their learning. This means that by the end of the Reception year many reach and exceed the nationally expected levels for their age. Pupils' progress accelerates rapidly in Years 1 and 2 where provision is also strong. In 2008, standards at the end of Year 2 were exceptionally high in all core areas at the expected Level 2 and at the higher Level 3. A notable success was that all pupils achieved a Level 2 in reading, writing and mathematics.

Work in lessons and in pupils' books, together with the school's own data shows that pupils, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress as they move through the school to Year 6. Standards in all core subjects at the end of Key Stage 2 are above

the national average, as reflected in the latest provisional test results for 2008. All pupils attained Level 4, the standard expected for their age in mathematics and science and over 91% did so in English. In addition, the proportion of pupils achieving the higher Level 5 was above the local and national average in all three subjects.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

The school has maintained its strength in this aspect of its work. Pupils' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding and has a strong impact on their good progress. Spirituality is enhanced by close links with the church and through the tolerance and respect for others which shine through this small caring community. Pupils are very polite, self-assured and get on extremely well with each other. As a result, they have positive attitudes to their work and are keen and enthusiastic learners. Pupils readily accept the responsibilities they are given and carry them out with great confidence and maturity. They feel safe and secure in school and speak highly of staff.

Throughout the school, careful attention is given to the emotional needs of all pupils through an extensive programme of personal, social and health education in which pupils are given specific time to express their feelings and anxieties. This means that relationships are second to none; pupils know the difference between right and wrong and are highly aware that they have responsibilities towards each other and the other adults in the school. Pupils recognise the needs of others through their regular charitable donations and by their strong commitment to participating in local community events such as the annual Grassington 'Dickensian Festival'.

Pupils have an excellent understanding of the importance of maintaining a healthy lifestyle through regular exercise and a balanced diet. Gaining the Healthy Schools award confirms the school's strong commitment to pupils' health and well-being.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching is good overall with elements of outstanding practice and enables pupils to make good progress in their work. Teachers are enthusiastic, well organised and develop strong relationships within the classroom. As a result, pupils thrive in a positive atmosphere where they are keen to learn new skills and eager to succeed. Teaching assistants provide an effective layer of extra support, particularly for those who find learning difficult. Effective use is made of assessment information in order to provide suitable tasks for pupils of all abilities. In the very best lessons, teachers ensure that activities are fun and briskly paced with a variety of stimulating and exciting activities that spur pupils to make excellent progress. Pupils are given the chance to discuss and share their ideas with others. Expectations are high and pupils readily take on responsibility for directing their own learning and making decisions. For example, in an outstanding English lesson in Year 5/6, pupils developed their understanding of persuasive writing by acting out scenarios in small groups where they were challenged to encourage people to: give up smoking, buy a new car, adopt fair trade principles, go sky-diving, put on sun cream and recycle. The atmosphere buzzed with excitement and as a result, pupils made excellent progress. Elsewhere on occasions, too many worksheets are used and pupils' work is sometimes over-directed. Senior leaders recognise that the next challenge is to move the quality of teaching and learning from consistently good to outstanding.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is good with some outstanding features, meets all statutory requirements and contributes significantly to pupils' enjoyment and good achievement. It is carefully planned, well balanced with a clear emphasis on the development of key skills in literacy, numeracy and science. The teaching of these subjects is made more meaningful to pupils through a good range of topics and themes which are enriched extremely well by visits to places of interest and visiting speakers from the local community. Consequently, pupils acquire new skills in a variety of settings within a context that they can relate to. For example, trips to York and Ripon have provided an excellent stimulus for historical projects and added greatly to pupils' enjoyment. Gaining International School Status confirms the school's clear commitment to helping pupils understand the diversity of British society and promoting pupils' awareness of other cultures. This is sensitively delivered across the curriculum in ways that are meaningful and interesting; for example, African dance workshops, international clubs, French language teaching and links with another school in Sierra Leone.

Provision for information and communication technology (ICT) across the curriculum has improved since the last inspection with the use of interactive whiteboards and the purchase of effective resources to support this facility.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The school provides good academic guidance and excellent pastoral support that enable pupils to enjoy their learning in a safe and secure environment. Careful attention is given to the needs of all pupils who state clearly that they are well supported and looked after. As one child said, 'teachers are always there to help us: we only have to ask'. Staff are vigilant and responsive to each individual and know them well. They work effectively as a team and are very successful in ensuring that all pupils, including the most vulnerable, feel valued and are fully involved in all lessons and activities. Excellent communication with parents ensures that pupils settle quickly and are well supported. Very strong links with local schools and agencies underpin the robust arrangements to support pupils' smooth transition to secondary school. All required systems and checks are in place to safeguard the pupils' well-being.

Systems for monitoring pupils' academic progress are much improved and benefit from the outcomes of regular assessment. This gives staff a good view of how well pupils are achieving and of any gaps in their learning. The introduction of targets in English and mathematics has given the pupils a clear focus but teachers do not always refer to them well enough in some lessons or when they mark the pupils' work. There are some good examples where pupils are given clear guidance on how to improve their work and reach the next level. However, the quality of marking is variable and not yet consistent across the school.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The success of the school is underpinned by good leadership and management that lie at the heart of the school's continual improvement. The headteacher sets the tone and is successfully steering the school in the right direction. She is passionate about developing the potential of

every child and is responsible for the warm, caring environment that prevails where every child is fully included in what is offered and known as an individual. She is very well supported by an equally committed team of staff and governors who share her vision and sense of purpose. The school's positive ethos owes much to the teamwork and enthusiasm of the school community to the welfare and personal development of all pupils and is clearly focused on raising achievement and improving the quality of learning. As a consequence, morale is high and staff are forward thinking and reflective. As a group they know the school extremely well and actively seek out ways to improve further the current position. This means that senior leaders have a very clear view of how well the school is performing and take decisive action to bring about further improvement. The school's rapid response to potential underachievement is a very strong feature of its work. For example, senior leaders have correctly identified that the achievement of more able 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. As a result, and along with sustained improvement following the previous inspection, the school is extremely well placed to improve further.

Governors have a good understanding of the school's strengths and priorities. They are extremely committed and are increasingly confident in challenging and supporting the school to improve further. They are involved in planning for improvement and in evaluating the school's performance.

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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	1

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?	1
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?	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	1
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

Thank you all very much for the friendly way in which you helped me when I visited your school recently. I really enjoyed chatting to you in the playground, in your lessons and in the pupils' interview. You told me how much you enjoy coming to school and, having spent the two days with you, I can understand why. You stated your opinions very clearly and they were very helpful to me. I am writing to let you know what I found out.

First and most importantly, I would like you to know that you go to a good school. You make good progress in your work and are well taught and very well looked after. Everyone gets on so well and you help one another in lessons and at playtime which is lovely to see. I was really pleased to see how well you behave at all times and the care and respect you have for others. I really liked the way you sang 'We shall go out with joy' in assembly and the respectful way you discussed how we all have a friend in Jesus. Just like your headteacher, I really enjoyed listening to the James Taylor song, 'You've got a friend'. It brought back a lot of memories for me, too. It must be my age.

You told me that you enjoy your work when you do 'good stuff' in lessons and when your teachers make things interesting and fun. I could see this with my own eyes when those of you in Class 3 were using role play to try to persuade people to do certain things. I had great fun working with the boys who tried to sell me a car even though it was too expensive.

Mrs Clayton and all the staff work very hard to make the school as good as it can be and I am confident it will continue to improve. To help with this, I have asked them to ensure that your teachers look more closely at how well you are learning when marking your books and that even more of your lessons are like the very best one I saw when you were very enthusiastic about your learning. You can help by telling your teachers what makes your lessons exciting and what helps you to learn.

Keep trying hard. I wish you and your families all the best for the future. I can see why your teachers enjoy working with you every day.