

St Herbert's CE VA Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	134789
Local Authority	Cumbria
Inspection number	328984
Inspection dates	11–12 February 2009
Reporting inspector	Sheila Mawer

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	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	273
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	Canon Stephen Pye
Headteacher	Mrs Sara Miller
Date of previous school inspection	15 June 2006
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Trinity Way Keswick Cumbria CA12 4HZ
Telephone number	017687 73017
Fax number	017687 75279

Age group	3–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This is a larger than average sized school. The proportions of pupils entitled to free school meals and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are both below average. Most pupils are from White British families. The school has Early Years Foundation Stage provision with places for 60 Nursery and Reception children. A transient population due to seasonal employment means many pupils enter or leave the school at times other than usual. The school has gained several awards for its provision. A Children's Centre opened recently on the same site as the school. It was not part of this inspection. An infant and junior school were amalgamated in 2005 to form the current primary school.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

St Herbert's is a satisfactory and improving school. The headteacher and staff have worked well to establish a new structure for the school since its amalgamation in 2005 and this has helped raise standards. Parents appreciate the caring and unified community. One parent wrote, typically, 'The school's strength is in its real sense of being a community, where pupils are taught to support and encourage each other.'

From starting points that are in line with expectations, pupils have shown a steady improvement in standards over the past three years, especially at the higher levels. According to the provisional test results, standards in 2008 in Year 6 were broadly average and achievement was satisfactory. Pupils in both key stages are making satisfactory progress, but some less able pupils are not achieving as well as they could in writing. The school is starting to address this weakness through a number of different strategies. The marking of writing, for example, has clear pointers now for improvement. It is too soon to evaluate the effectiveness of these initiatives, but early signs are positive.

Pupils' personal development is good and behaviour is excellent. Pupils respond well to the extra sports and healthy meals on offer, well aware of the benefits of keeping fit and healthy. Pupils talk with pride about their roles as play leaders. They enjoy and value the increased responsibilities they are given in school which, together with their satisfactory progress in basic skills, prepare them suitably for the next steps in their education.

Teaching is satisfactory. Some good teaching was seen during the inspection. In the best lessons, expectations are high and pupils learn effectively through a good variety of challenging activities that engage them well. This is not routinely the case for less able pupils in writing. Learning slows in some lessons when pupils spend too long listening to the teacher and not developing their own ideas enough. In some lessons, the range of methods used to engage pupils is limited and where this happens, progress slows. The curriculum is good and includes plenty of additional enrichment and enjoyment. A particular strength of the curriculum is the way that pupils' spiritual development is enhanced through excellent opportunities to play musical instruments and by good provision for art and craft. Care, guidance and support are good. The high proportion of pupils who enter or leave the school at times other than normal, presents continual challenges for staff. These are dealt with successfully by developing strong relationships that help pupils settle smoothly into school life. All staff play their part in ensuring that pastoral care is outstanding. Pupils with identified learning difficulties and/or disabilities are supported well, for instance by individual education plans, enabling them to make the same progress as their peers. Academic guidance is satisfactory, as the systems to support pupils are still being developed.

Leadership and management are satisfactory and self-evaluation is largely accurate. Supportive governors are beginning to ask the right questions about the school's performance. The work to promote community cohesion is good and well planned. The school has developed some effective and imaginative partnerships both within the local community and further afield. Through its strong links with the church, the school is at the centre of the community. An annual residential visit to Manchester enables pupils to visit their partnership school where they meet their pen pals, experience life in a city and engage with different ethnic and cultural communities. Global links are forged through visitors to the school and fundraising projects for developing countries. The school has begun to evaluate the impact of these activities. While

the leadership team ensures that it has the right priorities to move forward, it does not always pursue them with enough rigour or sense of urgency. Assessment, for example, though an identified priority, is not yet sufficiently developed to be fully effective as a tool for school improvement. Nevertheless, much has been achieved since the last inspection, notably a move from below average to broadly average standards. With strong teamwork evident, the school is in a satisfactory position to develop further.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 3

Children enter with skills and abilities that are typical for their age. They make satisfactory progress and most reach broadly average levels of attainment by the start of Year 1. Leadership and management of the unit are satisfactory and good attention is paid to promoting children's welfare. As a result, children feel secure and well looked after by caring staff. This helps them to settle smoothly into school routines. They know thoroughly what they should eat to stay healthy and that exercise is good for you. They enjoy their activities, particularly when adults join in to extend the learning. One child was so absorbed in role play in an area set up as a garage that he said to the inspector, 'That's not my teacher; it's the lady that serves petrol.' Because the children enjoy their learning, their behaviour is good. They show caring attitudes towards each other. Adults provide them with an appropriate balance of teacher-led and child-initiated activities that provide suitable help for learning and development. The Nursery and Reception classes have recently joined together to form one unit so that children can benefit from both areas. Currently, the new outside area is not yet fully used to support children's learning and the tasks planned inside and out do not always take into account differing abilities. Planning and assessment are being developed in order to take this into account and improve practice.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that expectations of less able pupils are more closely linked to their capabilities in order to raise their standards of writing.
- Broaden the range of teaching approaches in all lessons to engage all pupils in their learning, so that achievement and standards can continue to rise.
- Ensure greater rigour and a faster pace in carrying out the school's plans for improvement.

A small proportion of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Achievement is satisfactory. Pupils make satisfactory progress from their average starting point in Year 1. Standards are broadly average by the end of Year 2 in reading, writing and mathematics, and by the end of Year 6 in English, mathematics and science. The results in national tests at Year 6 have shown an upward trend since 2005, when they were below average. In the last two years, standards have been average, with pupils generally performing well at the higher levels in English, mathematics and science. Over the years, results in reading have been much stronger than writing. In 2008, twice as many pupils reached national expectations in reading than they did in writing. Progress in writing is too slow for less able pupils.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' personal development and their social, moral, spiritual and cultural development are good. Pupils work and play exceptionally well together and show an excellent understanding of each other's needs. Behaviour is outstanding as a result. Pupils enjoy all that the school has to offer and show positive attitudes to their learning. They are particularly attentive in lessons that actively involve them. Pupils have a good understanding of what constitutes a healthy lifestyle and know how to keep safe. They report that any incidents of misbehaviour are dealt with swiftly and effectively. The contribution made by pupils to the school community is good. They willingly take on responsibilities, such as tending the school's wormery and composting site. Well-planned enterprise projects and links with local businesses help pupils to be good citizens and provide them with a sound basis for their future. Pupils' progress in basic skills prepares them satisfactorily for the next stage of their education. Attendance is average with some absence caused by holidays during term time.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. Teachers are well organised and manage their classes well. Their subject knowledge is good and most lessons help pupils to think hard. In the best teaching, high expectations are made clear to all groups of learners. In a variety of exciting tasks, pupils are encouraged to become more involved in their learning. They work hard, are eager to succeed and in these lessons, make good progress. A challenging 'pocket money' investigation for less able pupils in mathematics was judged by them to be 'great fun'. The quality of teaching is not consistent in all classes. In a number of lessons, the range of teaching approaches is too narrow and pupils are less engaged in their learning. Work set for less able pupils in writing is not always matched accurately enough to their needs and this slows their progress. The progress of those with individual education plans matches their peers because they are well supported.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The school provides a rich curriculum which is enhanced by an excellent range of visits and visitors. These provide valuable first-hand experiences for pupils and often excite their imaginations. Literacy skills are promoted well across the curriculum. For example, pupils were inspired to develop their speaking and writing skills following a visit to the school by a Ghanaian storyteller. The recent organisation of pupils into ability groups for numeracy is having a positive impact on achievement. The curriculum meets the needs of most pupils in their academic development. The programme for personal, social and health education supports pupils' personal development well, and information and communication technology supports learning in a range of subjects. Many clubs after school are very well attended. They offer something for everyone and contribute significantly to the pupils' love of school.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Outstanding levels of care, along with close attention to the pastoral needs of every individual create a very happy and secure environment. Relationships are excellent. Safeguarding procedures meet government requirements and ensure pupils' well-being and safety. Staff are extremely proud of their pupils and know them exceptionally well. Newly developed assessment and tracking procedures are still being implemented. Academic support and guidance is satisfactory and systems are in the process of development. Pupils are aware of their targets for improvement in writing, numeracy and science. Pupils testify that the targets have made a positive difference to their learning. They say that they like them because they now know how to improve. However, targets in writing for less able pupils are too general and do not provide sufficient guidance for them to make the same gains as others.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Leadership, management and governance are satisfactory. The leadership team, including governors, has provided the school with a strong direction since the amalgamation. A harmonious and exceptionally caring community has been established, sharing a clear sense of purpose. The headteacher and deputy have restructured and strengthened the senior leadership team and the roles of subject coordinators to improve effectiveness. The impact of strengthened leadership is seen in the steady rise in standards. Together they have a clear understanding of the strengths of the school and where improvement is needed, to raise standards further. Targets are challenging but achievable and have enabled a growing number of pupils to reach higher levels by Year 6. The governors' focus is much sharper now as they move towards greater effectiveness and a keen desire to be better. Whilst good plans are in place for development, the pace of improvement has not always been rapid enough to further accelerate progress. Because of the teamwork evident, and the steady rise in standards since the last inspection, the school has satisfactory capacity to improve.

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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?	3
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	3

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?	2
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	3
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	2
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	3

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3
How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress	3

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	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	1
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	3

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?	3
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?	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	3
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	3
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**

13 February 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Herbert's CE VA Primary School, Cumbria, CA12 4HZ

I am writing to thank you all for the very kind way you looked after us when we inspected your school. We appreciated the time you gave to talk to us in lessons and during break times. We want you to know that your opinions about the school were important to us. St Herbert's is a satisfactory and improving school.

These are the strengths of your school.

- Your behaviour is excellent because you really care for each other and are very polite to adults.
- Adults in the school take excellent care of you all and make sure you are safe and happy.
- You enjoy taking part in an excellent range of activities and this helps you to stay fit and healthy.
- Most of your learning is satisfactory but, in good lessons, some of you are learning well and making good progress.
- We were delighted to see your lovely artwork around the school and how many of you are becoming very skilled musicians.

We have asked the school to make some things better. We would like:

- all of you who find writing hard to have just the right kind of challenge to help you to improve
- activities in lessons to be more varied so that all pupils are motivated and helped to make better progress
- governors and senior staff to work closely with the headteacher to ensure that improvements to the school happen more quickly and more efficiently.

We hope you will all continue to work hard, especially with your writing. Good luck to you all in the future.

Yours faithfully

Sheila Mawer

Lead inspector