

Holm Cultram Abbey CofE School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	112249
Local Authority	Cumbria
Inspection number	337879
Inspection dates	28–29 June 2010
Reporting inspector	Sue Sharkey

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	60
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Steven Pattinson
Headteacher	Mrs Linda McDonald
Date of previous school inspection	21 September 2006
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. The inspectors visited six lessons. Four teachers were observed and meetings were held with a group of parents, pupils, governors, and staff. Inspectors talked informally to parents. They observed the school's work, and looked at school's system for tracking pupils' progress, pupils' books, safeguarding documents, key policies and assessments. Inspection questionnaires from 28 parents and carers were received.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following:

- whether monitoring helps to improve pupils' progress
- whether strategies to raise attainment and achievement in Key Stages 1 and 2 are successful
- the progress of individual pupils and whether teaching is sufficiently challenging
- whether planning in the Early Years Foundation Stage includes full use of both the indoor and outdoor areas.

Information about the school

This is a small rural school where the proportion of pupils known to be entitled to a free school meal is higher than the national average. The proportion of pupils with special education needs and/or disabilities is above the national average. Pupils are taught in three classes: Reception with Years 1 and 2, Years 3 and 4 and Years 5 and 6. The number of pupils in each year group is often fewer than 10 and can be as low as three. The school has gained several awards in relation to promoting sporting and healthy lifestyles.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

3

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

3

Main findings

Holm Cultram Abbey CofE School is a satisfactory school, where pupils are happy and receive good care, guidance and support. This contributes well to the children's good personal, social and emotional development. Good relationships between staff and pupils underpin their good behaviour, and this means that pupils are confident to express their views. They develop good personal skills that equip them well for the future.

Children enjoy learning from the time they start in the Early Years Foundation Stage where they are well nurtured and cared for in a safe environment. Throughout the rest of the school pupils make satisfactory progress. Pupils with special education needs and/or disabilities make good progress because the school quickly puts in place very effective support systems. Standards are broadly average in English and mathematics reflecting satisfactory achievement and progress throughout the school. The school has a number of strategies in place to improve achievement in English, particularly writing, and recent assessment of pupils' work shows that these are proving to be successful. As yet this has not been the case in mathematics, particularly for pupils achieving higher levels as their work has not always been challenging enough.

Teaching is satisfactory overall. Teachers' skills and knowledge of how to extend pupils' learning are often better in English than they are in mathematics. Teachers' planning ensures that lessons contain a range of activities but they do not always build on pupils' previous learning in order to challenge their thinking and consolidate learning. Where teaching is good pupils are assessed through questioning during lessons but this is not consistently effective throughout the school. Teachers inform pupils during lessons of their progress; however, this does not fully extend to the marking of pupils' work so that they know their next steps in learning. Pupils' enjoyment of learning is reflected in their good attendance. Their involvement in the school and wider community encourages pupils to raise funds to support local and international charities. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good.

The school has satisfactory capacity to improve. The school's self-evaluation is satisfactory but it is not yet rigorous enough in its judgements on the school's performance. Since the last inspection a range of strategies has been put in place, some of which have been successful particularly those relating to pupils' care, guidance and support. There has been less success in raising attainment and pupils' achievement, particularly in mathematics. The school leaders are very caring and foster an ethos in which pupils can achieve well in aspects of their personal development.

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What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise attainment and improve achievement in mathematics by:
 - ensuring that work for pupils attaining higher levels is always challenging.
- Improve the quality of teaching so that it is consistently good or better across the school by:
 - ensuring that the assessment of pupils by questioning during lessons is used consistently across the school
 - ensuring that marking of pupils' work helps them to know how to improve
 - ensuring that activities build effectively on pupils' past work, challenge their thinking and consolidating their learning.
- About 40% of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted Inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

3

Throughout the school pupils are enthusiastic learners. They enjoy lessons, behave well and are motivated. For example, Years 1 and 2 pupils were excited during an English lesson when they had to write the instructions for the sand castles they had made the previous day. They worked well together, sharing suggestions and exploring new words. The activities ensured that all joined in and that pupils made good progress in using new vocabulary whilst developing their writing skills. Overall learning, achievement and enjoyment are satisfactory because activities do not always give pupils opportunities to practise their skills.

Pupils do well in developing their speaking and listening skills. Pupils talk positively about the Young Journalist scheme and how this has helped them enjoy and improve their writing. Strategies to raise pupils' achievement in mathematics have been less successful. Tasks for pupils capable of achieving higher levels are not challenging enough and pupils are easily disengaged. Pupils make satisfactory progress from their starting points. By the time pupils leave in Year 6, standards are broadly in line with the national average. There can be fluctuations in attainment at the end of Year 6 due to small numbers in different year groups.

Pupils have positive attitudes, are friendly, polite and helpful. They are proud of their school and quickly gain confidence as well as an ability to take responsibility from an early age. Pupils participate in the School Eco Group and develop a good awareness of environmental issues. They have successfully raised funds through making and selling biodegradable plant pots for seeds and further support the school's gardening club through ensuring that the compost bin is filled with fruit peelings and apple cores from snacks and lunches. Pupils are well aware of keeping a healthy lifestyle through regular exercise in school as well as learning about the importance of healthy eating. By the end of Year 6, they are prepared soundly for the next stage of their education.

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These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	3
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	3
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	2
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

Children make satisfactory progress throughout the school because the quality of teaching is satisfactory and sometimes good. Where teaching is good, particularly in Key Stage 1, good pace motivates and engages pupils well, teachers' expectations are high and discussions are lively. A further strength is teaching assistants who make a positive contribution to pupils' learning, especially those with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Teachers plan effectively but do not

always include activities that build on pupils' past work in order to challenge their thinking. Pupils' work is marked regularly but does not always help pupils know how to improve so that they can make the next steps in their learning. The use of information and communication technology for teaching is effective, an aspect of learning that pupils enjoy. Assessment through questioning by teachers in lessons, to extend pupils' learning and modify teachers' planning, is used but is not consistently effective across the school. The curriculum is suitably broad and balanced. The school is aware that basic skills of English and mathematics are not yet fully developed throughout other subjects to raise pupils' achievement, especially in mathematics. The curriculum provides well for pupils

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low.

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with learning difficulties through the use of appropriate intervention work. There is a wide range of enrichment activities after school offering pupils the chance to add to their skills and interests. The range of visitors, partnerships and extended opportunities available to pupils enhance their learning as well as their personal development. Recent visits and visitors have provided pupils with opportunities to explore different cultures in other countries and this has helped pupils towards their understanding of how others live.

The care given to pupils is good. Pupils say they feel safe and express confidence in their teachers and support staff, knowing that any problems they face will be dealt with quickly. Partnerships with outside agencies are embedded in the work of the school, ensuring that vulnerable pupils receive support tailored to their individual needs. The school has a good relationship with the pre-school nursery so that arrangements when children start school are good and the school prepares Year 6 pupils well for their move to secondary school.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	3
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	3
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher is motivated to seek further school improvement and has been successful in developing provision for pupils' personal, social and emotional needs. The school communicates well with parents and carers and is always keen to involve them in their children's learning. Roles and responsibilities are deployed effectively with the result that the expertise of teaching assistants as well as that of teachers is used well, especially in the support of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Pupils' progress is checked effectively and underachievement identified so that support systems are quickly put in place. Provision to secure equal opportunities for all pupils is satisfactory. Governors know the school's strengths and weaknesses, they support and challenge the school and are aware that attainment and pupils' achievement is a high priority. Policies and procedures for safeguarding are good and are monitored robustly. The school's involvement in the local community, and its success in extending pupils' awareness of other beliefs and ways of life, shows good promotion of community cohesion. The school rightly wants to provide pupils with opportunities to meet children from different cultures in order to complement the wide range of local based activities that already help pupils respect diversity. The school provides satisfactory value for money.

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These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	3
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	3
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	3
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	3
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage enjoy a good start, providing them with a firm foundation on which to build their future learning and success, particularly in their personal, social and emotional development. They settle quickly into the school because of the high quality care and support they receive as well as the good partnerships with parents and carers. The stimulating learning environment enables children to talk, play and learn to share together as well as use computers and explore the properties of different materials including sand to make their sandcastles. As a result the majority of children make good progress so that by the time they reach Year 1 most have reached the expected levels for their age particularly in communication, letters and sounds. Leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage are good, ensuring that planning reflects an understanding of how young children learn. Good use of both indoor and outdoor activities enables a good balance between child-initiated activities and those led by adults in order to consolidate early learning. The outdoor area is well resourced and motivates children to explore; for example children are able to buy nets from the shop to catch fish, whilst another child wears a wet suit to keep dry in the boat whilst she catches lobsters. Children are well taught and good use is made of assessment in helping identify what children need to do next.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate
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These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2

Views of parents and carers

The overwhelming majority of parents and carers who returned the questionnaire were positive about the way the school cares for and educates their children. They feel that their children enjoy school, are kept safe and they are pleased with their children's progress. Some took time to add comments to the questionnaire they returned, many to reinforce the strength of their positive views and inspectors agree with them.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Holm Cultram Abbey CofE School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 28 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 60 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	17	61	11	39	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	19	68	9	32	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	14	50	13	46	0	0	1	4
My child is making enough progress at this school	14	50	13	46	1	4	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	15	54	13	46	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	14	50	13	46	0	0	1	4
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	18	64	10	36	0	0	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	15	54	11	39	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	14	50	13	46	0	0	1	4
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	14	50	13	46	1	4	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	14	50	13	46	0	0	1	4
The school is led and managed effectively	14	50	14	50	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	14	50	13	46	1	4	0	0

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	51	45	0	4
Primary schools	6	41	42	10
Secondary schools	8	34	44	14
Sixth forms	10	37	50	3
Special schools	32	38	25	5
Pupil referral units	12	43	31	14
All schools	9	40	40	10

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above is for the period 1 September to 31 December 2009 and is the most recently published data available (see www.ofsted.gov.uk). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn term 2009 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement. ■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils. ■ The quality of teaching. ■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships. ■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



29 June 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Holm Cultram Abbey CofE School, Wigton, CA7 4RU

I am writing to thank you for making us feel so welcome when we visited your school. We really enjoyed talking to all of you and have good memories of how friendly and how well behaved you were. Your understanding of how to keep healthy and take lots of exercise was good. We were impressed with your commitment to the Eco Group and the work you do in the gardening club. We hope you enjoy eating the vegetables you have grown! It was good to see that you raise funds for charity and help your community. We hope you all enjoy doing this.

I enjoyed watching how you learn in your classrooms and outside as well, and have asked the school to make sure that when your work is planned you are always moving on from what you have already learnt and you have to think a lot! The school provides a wide range for activities for you, which I am pleased to see you enjoy. Teachers work hard to help you learn and I think that teaching and the curriculum that teachers plan in your school is satisfactory. I have asked the school to make several changes so that teaching gets even better; one of these is that when teachers mark your work they make sure they write a comment to help you know how to improve. Another is that teachers ask you more questions during lessons so that they know when you fully understand a new idea and you are ready to learn something fresh which may be even harder! I have also asked the school to challenge you more, particularly in mathematics, so that many of you achieve higher levels. I know these changes will help you all to improve your work.

Thank you for helping us during your school inspection. I hope those of you in Years 5 and 6 who visited Edinburgh had a really good time. Continue enjoying school and we hope you have a really good summer holiday.

Yours sincerely

Mrs Sue Sharkey

Lead inspector

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