



St Mark's C of E Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 112325
LEA Cumbria
Inspection number 278903
Inspection dates 20 June 2006 to 21 June 2006
Reporting inspector Mr Andrew Margerison

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Oxenholme Lane
School category	Voluntary aided		Natland
Age range of pupils	4 to 11		Kendal, Cumbria LA9 7QH
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01539 560719
Number on roll	149	Fax number	01539 561769
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Priest in Charge Tim Evans
Date of previous inspection	1 November 2000	Headteacher	

Age group 4 to 11	Inspection dates 20 June 2006 - 21 June 2006	Inspection number 278903
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

St Mark's Church of England Primary School in the village of Natland near Kendal serves the local community, but also takes pupils from Oxenholme and the outskirts of Kendal. A significant proportion of pupils are brought to school by bus. Pupils come from areas where social and economic circumstances are above average and the proportion of pupils who are eligible for free school meals is below average. When children enter the Reception class their attainment is above average because most children have experience of education before they start school. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below average, but varies from class to class. Most pupils are of White British origins and there are few pupils of other ethnic backgrounds. A very small minority of pupils have English as an additional language. The headteacher joined the school in September 2005.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

This satisfactory and rapidly improving school has some strong features. The school's own evaluation rates itself more highly. The main reason for the good pace of recent improvement is the new headteacher's effective drive to improve teaching and learning, assessment and subject leadership. Pupils start school with above average standards of attainment. They make satisfactory progress overall to reach good standards in Year 6. Teaching is strongly focused on developing pupils' basic skills, but the way that assessment information is used to plan lessons and ensure that all pupils are sufficiently challenged is not consistent. In addition, pupils are not always told what they need to do to improve their work. Inspection evidence confirms the school's view that pupils' personal development and the support, care and guidance provided for pupils are good. Pupils really love coming to school. The curriculum is well enhanced by an extensive programme of extra-curricular activities, but there is more scope for teachers to use all subjects to develop pupils' writing and their ability to use and apply mathematical knowledge. The school is establishing effective procedures for monitoring the quality and impact of its work. It has recently introduced effective systems to track pupils' progress so that those who need extra support are identified quickly. Subject leaders are beginning to use this information to identify strengths and weaknesses in their subjects, but it is too early for the impact of this to be reflected in pupils' achievement. In a relatively short time, the headteacher has created a positive ethos of shared direction and vision for the school among staff and governors so that the school is in a good position to move forward. The school gives satisfactory value for money.

What the school should do to improve further

- Provide more opportunities for pupils to use their basic literacy and numeracy skills in all subjects to improve their progress in writing and mathematics.
- Use assessment information more consistently to give all pupils the information they need to know how to improve their work.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Pupils' achievement is satisfactory. Children start in Reception with above average levels of attainment in all the areas of learning. Their progress is satisfactory overall, but good in speaking and listening, reading and number. Currently, most are working at the expected levels for their age in all the areas of learning and several work at higher levels. Standards in Year 2 have been above average in three of the last five years, but fell significantly in 2005 to be average. Inspection evidence shows that current pupils in Year 2 have made satisfactory progress this year in reading, writing and mathematics. Standards in Year 6 have been above average overall for the last five years. However, this has been mainly because of pupils' high attainment in English. Achievement in mathematics and science has generally been average. This pattern is

continuing this year with pupils making satisfactory progress overall in Years 3 to 6. However, they make better progress in reading, speaking and listening and number than in writing and their ability to use and apply their mathematical knowledge. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress. Pupils with English as an additional language make good progress due to the good quality support they receive.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is good. Parents are pleased that their children very clearly enjoy coming to school. Their outstanding enjoyment is reflected in their consistently good attendance and behaviour. Pupils play safely and understand the importance of eating healthily. Pupils are proud of their achievements and have good attitudes to school and their work. These attributes and the development of sound basic skills prepare them well for later schooling and life. Pupils know the difference between right and wrong and there have been no exclusions in recent years. Excellent relationships with adults and between pupils are based on respect for all and reflect the strong Christian ethos of the school. Children in the Foundation Stage quickly develop the social skills necessary for school. Pupils welcome the many opportunities to take on responsibilities around school. The 'buddy' system is rightly praised by pupils throughout the school and demonstrates mature and confident attitudes. Pupils of all ages are beginning to contribute to decision-making through the recently introduced class councils. The school promotes pupils' cultural development well, for example, through the strong links with a multi-ethnic school in Blackburn.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall with a number of strong features that are consistent across the school. Teachers clearly set out the aims of lessons at the start and are explicit in their expectations. Their management of pupils is good. As a result, pupils behave well and most lessons are positive learning experiences for pupils. Teaching in Reception very strongly emphasises the development of children's basic reading and number skills so they are well equipped to tackle more difficult work in subsequent years. In Years 1 to 6, the teaching of basic reading, spelling, grammar, punctuation and number skills is particularly effective so pupils make good progress in these aspects. Most teachers use questions well in class discussions to extend the learning of pupils of different abilities. Support staff make an important contribution to lessons and also to the progress made by pupils with learning difficulties and those with English as a second language. However, activities in lessons are not always varied enough to provide sufficient opportunities for all pupils, particularly the more able, to use and apply their good basic skills. The school has recognised that this is needed,

particularly in writing and mathematics. There are some good examples where teachers' marking really helps pupils improve their work, but this is inconsistent across the school.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The satisfactory curriculum is particularly effective in promoting pupils' personal, social and health education. Basic skills in reading and information and communication technology are used and developed well across many subjects. However, the use and development of basic writing and number skills are only satisfactory. The curriculum is well enhanced by a rich and varied number of school journeys, visiting speakers and clubs. Pupils benefit considerably from a wide range of sports, arts and other activities. The subject leader for physical education has forged strong links with other local schools which has resulted in the basic curriculum for physical education being enhanced well by the use of specialist coaching. Dance, drama, music and physical education make a good contribution to the quality of the curriculum, such as the development of a performance by the 4 to 7 year olds for the local community. The curriculum in the Foundation Stage is satisfactory and strongly fosters basic literacy and numeracy skills. However, the school has recognised that aspects of the provision, such as the use of the outdoor space, are not developed enough. The good provision for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is managed well by the special educational needs coordinator so that these pupils are well supported and make good progress .

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Care, guidance and support of pupils are good. Staff know pupils and their families well. Parents and pupils agree that the school is a secure and safe place to be. Arrangements for children starting in Reception are good and a strong relationship is forged with parents. As a result, children settle quickly into school routines. Procedures for child protection and health and safety are robust. Effective communication between staff, parents and external agencies ensures that pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities receive carefully focused support that meets their needs well. The headteacher has recently introduced good procedures that monitor and track pupils' achievements. As a result, the school now has better knowledge and understanding of the learning needs of individual pupils and where there are areas of learning that need to be improved. Pupils are involved in discussions about their progress, but there is more scope to use this information more effectively to make sure they all have a really secure understanding of what they need to do to improve.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Leadership and management are satisfactory overall. The headteacher leads the school well and, in a relatively short time, he has introduced a number of measures to improve pupils' achievement. Most significantly he has established good procedures to evaluate the work of the school, to monitor the quality of teaching and learning and to track the progress pupils are making in different subjects. He has begun to involve subject leaders and governors more closely in this process so that everyone involved is beginning to develop a clear understanding of the strengths and weaknesses in their subjects. Initially, this work has mainly focused on mathematics and science which the school has correctly identified as not being as strong as English. Governors have also been kept informed of the outcomes of the monitoring and tracking, although they do not yet have a clearly defined role in the process. The school has begun to identify groups of pupils who may need extra support and has accurately identified the main priorities for improvement. Staff have begun to work on these priorities, but there has been insufficient time for them to have a significant impact on pupils' progress. However, there is a shared vision in the school and a commitment to change and innovation so it is well placed to improve further.

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Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	School Overall	16-19
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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	NA
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2	NA
The quality and standards in foundation stage	3	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3	NA
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	Yes	NA
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	NA

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3	NA
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2	NA
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3	NA
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2	NA

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2	NA
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2	NA
The behaviour of learners	2	NA
The attendance of learners	2	NA
How well learners enjoy their education	1	NA
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	NA
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2	NA
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2	NA
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2	NA

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	3	NA
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3	NA
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2	NA

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	3	NA
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3	NA
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	3	NA
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3	NA
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	3	NA
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3	NA
The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected	Yes	NA

The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy	
Learners are encouraged and enabled to eat and drink healthily	Yes
Learners are encouraged and enabled to take regular exercise	Yes
Learners are discouraged from smoking and substance abuse	Yes
Learners are educated about sexual health	Yes
The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe	
Procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements	Yes
Risk assessment procedures and related staff training are in place	Yes
Action is taken to reduce anti-social behaviour, such as bullying and racism	Yes
Learners are taught about key risks and how to deal with them	Yes
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution	
Learners are helped to develop stable, positive relationships	Yes
Learners, individually and collectively, participate in making decisions that affect them	Yes
Learners are encouraged to initiate, participate in and manage activities in school and the wider community	Yes
The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being	
There is provision to promote learners' basic skills	Yes
Learners have opportunities to develop enterprise skills and work in teams	Yes
Careers education and guidance is provided to all learners in key stage 3 and 4 and the sixth form	NA
Education for all learners aged 14–19 provides an understanding of employment and the economy	NA

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

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To the pupils of:

St Mark's C of E Primary School

Oxenholme Lane

Natland

Kendal

Cumbria

LA9 7QH

20 June 2006

Dear Pupils

Thank you for welcoming us to your school this week for the inspection. Thank you for lending us your books, talking to us and letting us join in with some of your lessons.

We were particularly impressed by your behaviour and how much you obviously enjoy being at school. We were also pleased with the standards of your reading and basic number skills. However, we feel that some of you could make better progress in writing, mathematics and science. We think that your school is satisfactory now, but will improve because of the new approaches Mr Barfoot has put into place to check how well you are doing. In particular, we have asked the governors, Mr Barfoot and the staff to provide more opportunities for you to use your literacy and numeracy skills in all subjects and to use the information they get from assessments to make sure you know what you need to do to improve your work.

Thank you again for helping us and best wishes for the future.

Yours sincerely

Andy Margerison
John Heap

(Lead inspector)(Team Inspector)