

Old Hutton C of E School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	112263
Local Authority	Cumbria
Inspection number	310832
Inspection dates	5–6 February 2008
Reporting inspector	Steve Isherwood HMI

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 on roll	
School	92
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Mark Stott
Headteacher	Mr Graham Frost
Date of previous school inspection	1 February 2005
School address	Old Hutton Kendal Cumbria LA8 0NQ
Telephone number	01539 773620
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Introduction

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

Description of the school

This is a smaller than average sized school, situated in the village of Old Hutton close to the town of Kendal in Cumbria. Pupils are drawn from a wide range of social backgrounds. A number of families live outside the immediate locality. All pupils are of White British heritage. There are no pupils who are eligible for free school meals. The number of pupils identified as having learning difficulties and/or disabilities is above average. When pupils start school their attainment is generally in line with that which is typical for their age.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Old Hutton is a good school and some aspects of its work are exemplary. Pupils' achievements are good. They reach above average standards in their work and make excellent progress in their personal development. They feel very safe and secure, and are happy and enthusiastic learners. They have a strong awareness of keeping fit and eating healthily. This is because of good provision and exceptionally high standards of care and support for each individual. This is a school with a strong family feel and a caring Christian ethos, where every child is encouraged to grow in confidence and self-esteem. Relationships are second to none. As a result, 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. Consequently, pupils become very responsible members of the school and the wider community, and are confident in making decisions and showing initiative. The school is very well thought of in the community and there are outstanding partnerships with other schools and agencies.

Parents are hugely supportive and overwhelmingly hold the school in high regard. They are very appreciative of how each child is fully included and known as an individual. An apt comment which sums up how many feel was made by one parent when she said, 'We are delighted with the education our son is receiving. We feel strongly that his social, emotional and academic needs are being met in a broad and balanced curriculum.'

Children make good progress from the moment they enter the school. This is because of the excellent provision in the Foundation Stage where the teaching is strong and activities are very well planned. By the time they leave in Year 6, the pupils' standards are well above average in all core subjects at the expected Level 4 and at the higher Level 5. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress because information about their progress is used well to support their learning and they receive good support in lessons. A significant factor in this good achievement is that teaching is good overall and the curriculum is well planned with a strong emphasis on the development of key skills in literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT). However, there are pockets of inconsistency which are preventing the overall quality of teaching from rising to outstanding. In the best lessons, pupils are encouraged to take responsibility for their own learning and share their ideas with others. New learning consistently builds well on pupils' prior knowledge. Pupils are involved in assessing their own work and that of their peers. However, they are not always given time to then improve and review their points for improvement.

The success of the school is underpinned by the very effective leadership of the headteacher. The strengths identified at the previous inspection have been built upon through continuous improvement. His vision of a caring community in which the learning is personalised to individual needs and where teachers and pupils are empowered to make their own decisions is crystal clear and has inspired staff and governors to make positive changes. As a result, the leadership team is forward thinking and reflective, and actively seeks out ways to improve further. Computerised systems for interpreting data, setting targets and tracking progress on the school's excellent website are very well used. This means that the school has correctly identified where pupils could achieve more. For example, some of the higher attaining pupils, mostly boys, have improved in writing as a result of effective action taken by teachers. The school's rapid response to potential underachievement is a very strong feature of its work. As a consequence, and along with its other strengths, the school has good capacity to improve further.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 1

The Foundation Stage is delivered in a joint Reception and Year 1 class. Despite some limitations of space and access to outdoor play areas, the outstanding quality of the provision enables children of all abilities to make excellent progress across the areas of learning. At the start of Reception, the majority of children are around the expected levels for their age, although individual starting points vary within a range. By the end of the Reception year, after only three terms, the learning levels overall for the school are considerably higher than the local authority and national scores in most areas of learning. This includes exemplary personal skills and very positive attitudes to learning. For example, during the inspection one child was seen spontaneously helping another to log onto the computer by helping her find her lost password! Each child's progress is observed regularly, and this helps the teacher accurately plan the next steps of learning. Children enjoy a vast range of stimulating activities to help them learn inside and outdoors. Often these are linked to a theme, for instance the Chinese restaurant which provided opportunities to write, read, draw and talk as well as learning about another culture. Their levels of independence and confidence are particularly impressive. Meticulous arrangements are in place to ensure their safety, health and well-being. Parents feel welcomed into the classroom at all times. They particularly value opportunities such as story sharing mornings to involve them more closely in their child's learning. They are kept well informed of their child's progress. The Foundation Stage is extremely well led and managed. Staff regularly review the impact of their work in order to keep on improving the provision.

What the school should do to improve further

- Move the quality of teaching and learning from consistently good to outstanding.
- Provide more time for pupils to build on their own assessments to move their learning further forward.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Standards fluctuate year on year because of the small numbers of pupils involved and the different make up of each year group. Nevertheless, pupils' current work, as well as the test results from 2007, shows standards are above average and pupils' achievement is good.

Although children start school with a wide range of abilities, most enter the Foundation Stage with skills that are generally in line with those typically expected. The outstanding provision in the early years 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 often exceed the nationally expected levels for their age. Pupils continue to make good progress in Years 1 and 2 where provision is strong. In 2007, standards at the end of Year 2 in all core areas were broadly in line with the national average and although above average numbers of pupils achieved the higher level in mathematics, fewer did so in reading and writing. This was because the pupils' abilities were less strong than in previous years.

Work in lessons and in pupils' books together with the school's own data shows that pupils, including those with learning 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 significantly above the national average, as reflected in the latest test results for 2007 and have been driven up from below average levels over the previous two years. A notable success was that all pupils

attained Level 4, the standard expected for their age, in science and over 94% of pupils did so in English and mathematics. In addition, the proportion of pupils achieving the higher Level 5 was above the national average in all three subjects.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

The school has maintained and improved 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. Pupils say they enjoy school a great deal, and feel safe and secure. Parents' questionnaires overwhelmingly endorse this view. It is also evident in the pupils' good attendance and by their enthusiasm to take part in all that the school has to offer.

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 and opportunities to express their feelings and anxieties. This means that pupils have super attitudes to their work and behave extremely well. Pupils show sensitivity to their peers and recognise that they have responsibilities towards each other and the adults in the school. As one child said, 'In circle time, we talk about being kind and discuss our problems and feelings but we don't mention any names.'

Pupils have an exceptionally good awareness of the importance of a healthy lifestyle and are keen to take on extra responsibilities and show initiative. Gaining the Healthy Schools award confirms the school's strong commitment to pupils' health.

Pupils recognise the needs of others who are less fortunate through their regular charitable donations. They have a strong social conscience and are proud to sing in church and to others in the local community.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching is good through the school; in the Foundation stage, it is outstanding. Pupils make good progress and are very positive about learning. This is because the teaching is effective in moving them forward and in capturing their interest. Although the majority of lessons are at least good, some activities move pupils on at a faster pace than others. Pupils make most progress in lessons where teachers plan different learning experiences according to pupils' levels. This results in greater steps forward than in lessons where everyone is taught the same thing. Teachers make good use of resources to help pupils' interest and make lessons more fun. For example, a loud and rhythmic rock song provided an excellent springboard for older pupils to write vivid images in their poetry. Teachers' subject knowledge is good and means they are confident in what they are teaching. They have high expectations of behaviour, but also show that they value the pupils' thoughts and ideas. This results in lively and creative discussion and reflection. Pupils enjoy learning and are always keen to do more. They respond to appropriate challenges, particularly those provided online in interactive discussions about game scores. This innovative and effective approach is also having a positive impact on learning from home.

The school has developed a sophisticated system of assessment, enabling teachers to monitor progress and target support. Pupils are also guided to assess their work themselves and are involved in setting their own targets. These activities help them reflect on how they can improve their work and make progress in their learning. However, some teaching does not always allow sufficient time for the necessary improvements to be made and reviewed. Teaching assistants and other classroom helpers support learning effectively in a variety of ways. Parents are very positive about the ways in which the school keeps them informed about their children's progress.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The school provides a rich and varied curriculum that the pupils enjoy and appreciate. It meets the needs of all groups of learners, helping them to achieve well. Social skills and behaviour are helped to develop positively because the curriculum interests and engages pupils. A key strength of the school is ICT. Computers and interactive whiteboards are used constantly by teachers and pupils as part of their everyday work and this is very effective in motivating and extending learning. Subject teaching is regularly enriched through visits, visitors and special events. During the inspection the whole school enjoyed a French Day, including showing their passports and spending their Euros at a market in the village hall. The confident way that Reception children greeted inspectors with 'Bonjour!' was clear evidence of how this was helping their learning and developing their independence. The school has a clear commitment to helping children understand the diversity of British society and racial equalities. This is sensitively delivered across the curriculum in ways that are meaningful and interesting, for example through Afro-Caribbean dance workshops, Asian and Oriental food displays and discussions with visitors about their religions and customs.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Promoting high standards of care lies at the heart of the school's work. Careful attention is given to the needs of all pupils and the school provides them with excellent personal support. All required checks, systems and procedures are in place to safeguard the pupils' well-being.

All adults know the pupils and their families well. Pupils tell us they feel safe and free from bullying, expressing high levels of trust in the adults who care for them and the support systems provided. Teachers are caring and vigilant around school which means that pupils settle quickly and know there is always someone to whom they can take their worries. Induction procedures for pupils starting school are strong and very strong links with local schools and agencies underpin the good arrangements to support pupils' smooth transition to secondary school.

Pupil's progress is carefully tracked and benefits from the outcomes of regular analysis. Teachers are aware of those pupils not making sufficient progress and take appropriate action. Systems for marking pupils' work are improving. There are some excellent examples of where pupils are given clear guidance on how to improve their work and reach the next level. The best examples are from teachers who have a clear understanding of how pupils learn effectively. However, the quality of marking is sometimes variable and is not consistent in some classes. The introduction of targets has given the pupils a focus but the teachers do not always refer to them well enough in lessons or when they mark the pupils' work.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The leadership and management of the school are good. The headteacher is successfully steering the school in the right direction, works with energy and commitment and has generated a strong momentum for improvement. He is passionate about improving pupils' learning and in ensuring that all pupils at Old Hutton achieve their true potential with high levels of care and support for individual needs. He is well supported by an effective team of staff and governors. Together they possess a clear vision that is well focused on raising achievement and on improving the quality of learning. All staff give of their best. There is a strong sense of teamwork and morale is high. Subject areas are well led. There is clear agreement on the strengths and weaknesses of the school. This means that senior leaders have a clear view of how well the school is performing and the areas where further improvement is required. For example, the school has correctly diagnosed the key priorities to build on the good improvements already achieved, particularly in developing pupils' learning and in enhancing the quality of teaching. They are also aware that at present, procedures to check on the quality of teaching and learning by senior leaders need fine-tuning.

The governing body provides good support to the school. Its members are extremely committed, have a clear understanding of their role and are increasingly knowledgeable about what is happening in school.

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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 effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	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 disabilities make progress	2

Personal development and well-being

How good is 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
How well 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 the 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

¹ Grade 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.

Annex A

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	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	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

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

7 February 2008

Dear Children

Inspection of Old Hutton C of E School, Cumbria, LA8 0NQ

Thank you all very much for the friendly way in which you helped Mrs Clipson-Boyles and me when we visited your school recently. We really enjoyed chatting to you in the playground, in your classrooms and in the interview with the school council. You all told us how much you enjoy coming to school and, having spent the two days with you, we can understand why. You go to a good school that is such a happy and safe place to be. Everyone gets on so well and you help one another in lessons and at playtime which is lovely to see. We were really pleased to see how well you behave at all times and how beautifully you sang in French during assembly. I wish I could play the guitar as well as your headteacher.

You told us that you enjoy your work and that your teachers help you to learn well by making your lessons interesting and often fun. We agree. We could see this with our own eyes when you visited the French market in the village hall and when Year 3 were using their bodies as a compass to point to different directions in their classroom. We were so pleased when one of the older boys allowed us to keep a copy of his excellent poem. We can also see how all the adults in school look after you really well and your parents told us this too. We were delighted to see how much money you raised for horse riders who have disabilities.

Mr Frost and all the staff work very hard to make the school as good as it can be and we are sure that it will continue to improve. To help with this, we have asked them to ensure that even more of your lessons include opportunities for you to learn in different ways and that your teachers look more closely at how well you are learning. We are sure that you will help them by telling them what makes lessons interesting and what helps you to learn.

You are a credit to your mums, dads and carers. We can see why your teachers enjoy working with you every day. Keep trying hard. We wish you and your families all the best for the future.

Yours sincerely

Steve Isherwood

Her Majesty's Inspector