

Levens C of E Primary School

Church Road, Levens, Kendal, LA8 8PU

Inspection dates 9–10 October, 2012

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	Requires improvement	3
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Requires improvement	3

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement. It is not good because

- Although overall, pupils make expected progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage and in Key Stage 2, the proportion of pupils making expected progress in English in Key Stage 1 is not yet consistent enough. Those exceeding expectations in English and mathematics by the end of Year 6 are too few.
- Although improving, attainment in reading in Key Stage 1 is below average as a result of some weaknesses in the teaching of phonics (letters and the sounds they make).
- While there are examples of good teaching across the school, too often not enough activities in lessons meet the needs of all pupils and this prevents them from making good progress.
- The standard of presentation of pupils' work across subjects varies and this leads to slower progress in improving pupils' writing across Key Stages 1 and 2.
- Leaders and managers do not yet sufficiently monitor how effectively teachers use the tracking of pupils' progress to appropriately plan lessons that meet the needs of all pupils. Opportunities for new staff to learn from the best practice are limited.
- The governing body is very supportive of the school but it lacks rigour in evaluating the accuracy of the school's self-evaluation and the impact of recent initiatives to improve the quality of teaching and learning.

The school has the following strengths

- Behaviour and safety are good. Pupils are respectful towards each other and towards staff and visitors to the school. Pupils say they feel safe and learn how to stay safe in their local community.
- The tracking of pupils' progress is detailed and used effectively to record achievement and progress.
- Throughout Key Stage 2, pupils make good progress in reading leading to attainment which is above average by the time they leave Year 6.
- Leaders and managers, including the governing body, have addressed issues of poor progress and introduced a number of new initiatives, including the appointment of additional staff and new class structures.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed four teachers and visited nine lessons.
- Discussions were held with school staff, groups of pupils, parents, a representative of the local authority and members of the governing body.
- The inspector observed the school's work and looked at a wide range of documentation including safeguarding documents, the school's self-evaluation and development plans, local authority evaluations, records of pupils' attainment and progress, and pupils' work.
- The inspector talked to parents and took account of 19 responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) in planning the inspection.

Inspection team

Naomi Taylor, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Levens is much smaller than the average sized primary school.
- The vast majority of pupils are of White British heritage.
- The proportion of pupils supported through school action is below the national average.
- The proportion of pupils supported at school action plus or who have a statement of special educational needs is above the national average.
- There are currently no pupils who are known to be eligible for the pupil premium.
- Children are taught in four classes in the mornings: Class 1 comprises of Reception and Year 1; Class 2 comprises of Year 2; Class 3 comprises of Years 3 and 4; Class 4 comprises of Years 5 and 6. In the afternoons, Year 2 pupils join Years 3 and 4.
- There has been significant but unavoidable turbulence in staffing, including the absence of the headteacher.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in English and mathematics.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching in order to increase the proportion of pupils achieving at least expected progress in English by the end of Key Stage 1, and better than expected progress in English and mathematics in Key Stage 2 by:
 - ensuring that work consistently provides greater challenge for the wide range of pupils' abilities in every class
 - improving the pace of activities in phonics sessions for the younger children to accelerate their progress in reading throughout Key Stage 1
 - ensuring consistently high expectations in the presentation of pupils' work in all subjects and thereby accelerating progress in writing.
- Accelerate school improvement by ensuring that leaders and managers at all levels:
 - rigorously monitor how effectively teachers are using the tracking of pupils' progress to set work at the right level for pupils of all abilities
 - support new staff by increasing the opportunities for them to share good and better practice beyond the school.
- Develop the capacity of the governing body to work effectively with the senior leadership team to ensure that accurate self-evaluation is used to monitor and review the impact of recent initiatives.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Effective transition arrangements ensure that pupils settle quickly into the Early Years Foundation Stage. Children learn to show respect for each other and their environment and they enjoy finding out things for themselves, alongside adult-led activities, both in the classroom and outdoors.
- Children make expected progress in the Reception class from overall starting points that vary from broadly in line with age-related expectations to below expectation. However, generally, children's speech and language skills are weak on entry and this impacts on the development of their reading and writing skills.
- Progress in Key Stage 1 has recently been disappointing with too few pupils making expected progress, particularly in reading and writing. Turbulence in staffing and the absence of the headteacher have all impacted on pupils' achievement, but current data shows an improving picture, particularly in pupils' progress in mathematics in Key Stage 1.
- In Key Stage 2, most pupils make expected progress but too few exceed expectations in both writing and mathematics. While pupils' progress and attainment in reading has improved to above the national expectation, in mathematics they are broadly average, their progress and attainment in writing remains weaker.
- In Key Stage 1, pupils who read to the inspector demonstrated variable reading abilities. Year 1 pupils linked different letters and sounds to work out unfamiliar words, but occasionally pupils guess difficult words rather than working them out systematically. Pupils were able to retell part of the story in their own words which reinforced that they understood the story.
- Pupils' attainment in reading by the time they reach the end of Year 2 is below national expectations but improving. There is a steadily improving picture in Key Stage 2 and by the time they leave school in Year 6, attainment in reading is above the national expectations and they read fluently.
- The gap between gender groups is closing and this demonstrates the school's satisfactory promotion of equality of opportunity. Throughout Key Stage 2, pupils, including those who are disabled or who have special educational needs are making broadly expected progress. Progress in Key Stage 1 is slower for all groups of pupils but recent initiatives are starting to have a positive impact.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- In some lessons, there is too much whole-class teaching which does not meet the needs of the wide range of abilities so the pace of learning is not rapid enough. Examples of this were seen in a Key Stage 1 phonics sessions when some pupils found the work too easy but were not then set more challenging tasks.
- While there are examples of neatly and carefully presented work in extended writing and topic work, many books illustrated that pupils do not consistently take enough pride in their work. Careless mistakes and poor writing in some subjects slow pupils' overall progress in writing.
- When teaching is good, well-planned lessons include activities which meet the wide range of abilities of all pupils. Learning is fun and pupils are keen to find out things for themselves and they are taught how to check and edit their work. The pace of learning is swift and this leads to accelerating pupils' progress. Throughout the school, there are positive relationships between teachers, teaching assistants and pupils and this leads to pupils' good behaviour and good attitudes to learning.
- Evidence of these strengths was seen in a Years 3 and 4 mathematics lesson that the teacher had planned well so that activities were varied and challenged the full range of ability. Pupils were eagerly working in small groups on multiplication in number sentences and the teacher

moved amongst them skilfully asking pertinent questions to extend their learning. The higher ability pupils worked out the answers methodically in their books and showed they were developing their skills well as independent learners by checking their work using calculators.

- Most teachers mark work regularly and thoroughly, praising good work and providing information on the next steps that pupils need to take in order to make further progress. Older pupils are given opportunities to assess their own and each other's work which helps them to improve.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- The behaviour of pupils in lessons and around the school is good. Pupils show respect for each other, the staff and visitors to the school and this leads to a strong school community where pupils are happy. Most parents say they are happy with the school and would recommend it to others.
- Appropriate systems are in place to make pupils aware of different types of bullying and as a result, incidents of bullying are rare. Pupils learn how to stay safe in their own communities and when they go on trips and residential visits which the pupils clearly enjoy. Older pupils play well with the younger children and act as good role models.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is a strength of the school. This is due to the ethos in the school and the opportunities for personal development through the planned curriculum and extra-curricular activities. There are many visitors to the school, such as musicians, who provide specialist tuition which the pupils enjoy.
- There are good links with parents through newsletters, the governing body and through Friends of Levens School which is proactive in organising community events which the pupils enjoy. After a period of turbulence in staffing, there are now new and additional staff who have an open door policy. They have quickly gained the confidence of pupils and their parents.
- The School Council and the Eco-Team represent the views of pupils and organise a range of events, including fundraising for people who are less fortunate than themselves.
- Most pupils are punctual at the start of the school day and they say they enjoy coming to school. Attendance is average.

The leadership and management requires improvement

- The senior leadership team has a clear vision for driving school improvement. A period of unavoidable turbulence in staffing has slowed the pace in improving the quality of teaching in the last two years, but it is clear that the quality of teaching is now improving.
- New staff have joined the school and an additional teaching post, agreed by the governing body and senior leaders, has resulted in Year 2 being taught separately for English and mathematics since September, 2012. This is working well and there is evidence of progress accelerating, particularly in mathematics. The new staff are supported through a range of professional development opportunities, but the school does not yet benefit from linking with a high-performing school of a similar size to experience best practice.
- The local authority has been providing additional support for the school since 2011. A headteacher from another school has been working as a consultant in the school. This has led to improvements in pupils' progress in mathematics and helped with the smooth running of the school, under the capable management of the senior teacher, during the headteacher's absence.
- The curriculum is providing pupils with a range of opportunities for learning both within the school and beyond. This is enhanced by a range of extra-curricular activities, trips and residential visits which contribute to both academic and personal development.

- Safeguarding procedures meet statutory requirements and there are examples of good practice.
 - There is a thorough and effective tracking system to monitor pupils' progress, but senior leaders do not yet monitor how effectively teachers are using this information to inform the planning of lessons to precisely meet the needs of the wide range of ability in every class.
 - **The governance of the school:**
 - There is not yet enough rigour in how the governing body is monitoring the effectiveness of new initiatives and challenging the school in order to enhance the quality of teaching.
 - The governing body is highly committed and supportive of the school.
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What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	112262
Local authority	Cumbria
Inspection number	378448

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

Type of school	All-through
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4-11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	77
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Ruth Crossley
Headteacher	Matt Foxwell
Date of previous school inspection	12 June, 2009
Telephone number	01539 560694
Fax number	01539 560594
Email address	office@levens.cumbria.sch.uk

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