



Dent C of E Voluntary Aided Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 112331
Local Authority Cumbria
Inspection number 289248
Inspection date 6 December 2006
Reporting inspector Heather Evans

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Laning
School category	Voluntary aided		Dent, Sedbergh
Age range of pupils	4-11		Cumbria, LA10 5QJ
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01539 625259
Number on roll (school)	46	Fax number	01539 625076
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Mrs Margaret Fothergill
		Headteacher	Mrs Phillipa Summers
Date of previous school inspection	1 March 2002		

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

This is a very small school in Cumbria. It is linked to the diocese of Bradford. All the pupils speak English as their first language. In this rural village only a few pupils claim an entitlement to free school meals. Many families live in rented accommodation and most pupils are brought to school by bus from outlying hamlets. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is well above the national average. Attainment on entry varies greatly from year to year. It is broadly average but many pupils have restricted language skills when they arrive. The headteacher took up her post in August 2006.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a good school with some outstanding features. Pupils and parents agree that this is a school in which children thrive. Many pupils attain standards above the expected level and most achieve well. Pupils confidently explain how the school has helped them to keep safe. They demonstrate exceptional common sense in their awareness of how to stay healthy. Pupils appreciate the fact that their views are listened to and acted upon. Alongside their growing academic skills, they are developing extremely good personal skills that prepare them well for the future. Pupils clearly understand the importance of contributing to the community. They develop strong feelings of self-worth and frequently initiate fund raising activities for local and national charities. The rich and diverse curriculum includes a wide range of clubs and activities which stimulate pupils' enthusiasm for learning and add to their enjoyment of school.

Provision for Reception children is good. Well organised assessment and teaching contribute to children making good progress. Nearly all reach their goals and are well prepared for the National Curriculum. Good progress is sustained throughout Key Stages 1 and 2, mainly because of effective teaching. Small numbers of pupils in each year group render comparisons with national averages unrealistic. Individual pupils, though, nearly always meet or exceed their targets.

Because of small numbers, one pupil's results often have a very large impact on the scores for any year. Standards are, however, currently above the expected levels at the end of Years 2 and 6 and most pupils achieve the higher level, Level 5, in English and mathematics by the end of Year 6. In science, pupils enjoy opportunities to plan their own experiments and investigations. The drive to improve writing, which was a priority for the school last year, has been successful. Every pupil is planned for separately and work is tailored to meet individual needs but pupils are not sufficiently involved in the process. The school delights in every single achievement whether academic, sporting, artistic or musical.

Leadership and management are good. The skill and dedication of the governing body are outstandingly good. The school has an accurate view of what is working well and what needs attention. There has been very good improvement since the previous inspection and there is good capacity to improve further. Finances are managed very well and the school provides good value for money. The new headteacher is keen to maintain the gains of the recent past in sport and music and has begun to develop pupils' artistic and creative skills. Teachers and governors share her clear vision for increasing links across all subjects.

What the school should do to improve further

- Share clear learning objectives with pupils and incorporate their views in setting precise individual targets for mathematics and English.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Each year, standards fluctuate because numbers of pupils are so small. There are no clear or consistent trends. The assessment and tracking records of individual pupils show that, over time, most pupils achieve well. From where they were on entry to the Foundation Stage, pupils do well by the time they leave at the end of Year 6. In many years, scores are distorted by variations in the numbers of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. In 2005, analysis of individual assessments in Year 2 showed that while attainment in reading, writing and mathematics was in line with expected levels, attainment in writing was not as good as in the previous year. In Year 6, pupils attained at or above the expected levels and achieved their targets in English, mathematics and science but writing standards were lower than expected. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities did well in the face of their difficulties and their achievement was good. In 2006, two out of three pupils in Year 6 attained Level 5 in English and mathematics, exceeding the expected level. Agreed targets were reached. In the present Year 6, the targets set are ambitious but the evidence of inspection and teachers' records suggests that the school is well placed to achieve them. Raising standards in writing has been a priority over the past year and pupils are increasingly proving that they can use their enhanced skills to improve their work in many other subjects as well as English.

Personal development and well-being Grade: 2

Pupils' personal development is good. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. Pupils enjoy coming to school and attendance is above average. Pupils have very good attitudes to learning. They value the wide range of activities presented to them and engage in them enthusiastically. Pupils are sensible, confident and eager to learn. They say that school is a safe place where bullying is not a problem. Excellent relationships promote mutual trust that reflects the school's positive, Christian ethos. The school council plays an important role in the everyday life of the school. It gives members good experience of accepting responsibility and decision-making within the school and the wider community. All pupils appreciate being involved in electing their representatives. Pupils instinctively look after one another, as when welcoming newcomers or when acting as buddies to younger children at playtime. They have an excellent shared understanding about how to keep safe and lead healthy lives. Pupils are proud of their links with schools overseas and in other parts of the diocese. They develop an excellent understanding of right and wrong. They are committed to taking care of the environment and appreciate how much the local community values them and their school. Their personal and academic skills prepare them well for the next phase of their education and for work in their adult life.

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Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching is good. Pupils enjoy their work, learn well and make good progress. There is good focus on practical activities in the Foundation Stage. In Years 1 and 2, pupils undertake varied and interesting activities that cater for individual needs and abilities. Good teaching of letters and sounds is improving pupils' writing and reading. Pupils who find learning difficult are well supported and make good progress. In Key Stage 2, pupils are given increased challenge and more choice. Additional specialist teachers work well with small mixed-age groups to ensure work is well matched to pupils' individual needs. This work is seen to particularly good effect in science, music and in sport, where there are strong links with pupils from other schools. In science and information and communication technology (ICT), pupils learn well because they are taught to use enquiry and investigation confidently. Teaching assistants make vital contributions and ably support the teachers. The quality of marking varies; in the best instances, teachers point out where pupils have done well and suggest how pupils might improve; at other times this is missing. Teachers frequently encourage pupils to use skills learned in writing and ICT in other subjects. This helps pupils to understand that things they learn in one lesson help them to succeed in other work later on.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is good. Strong emphasis is placed on developing pupils' basic skills. Children in the Foundation Stage are given a good start to their education through an interesting curriculum. The school links subjects together well, adding interest to learning activities. One boy said, 'I am never quite sure what subject we are doing, we are doing properties of materials, that's science but we are really doing maths or design and technology as well, it's great! Yes, good fun.' These links are very successful and are gradually extending across all subjects. A rich range of extra curricular activities, particularly in sport, music and the arts, enriches pupils' experiences. Many learn to play a musical instrument. Older pupils particularly enjoy visits to the climbing wall in Kendal. Personal development is given high priority and care of the environment is important to pupils of all ages. Careful planning and effective support promote the learning of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Everyone is included in all activities and has equal access to the curriculum. As a result, pupils learn well. Strong links with the relevant outside agencies enable staff to offer good help to pupils.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Pupils are well cared for, guided and supported. Pastoral care is very good. Staff develop a good knowledge of the pupils and their families. Parents say how much they appreciate the sensitive support and care that are provided. Along with their children, they are full of praise for the benefits of the new Yoga classes that are both physically and emotionally beneficial. Pupils say that they feel safe and secure at school. Procedures for protecting and safeguarding pupils are very rigorous and are understood by everyone.

Teachers make good use of information about pupils' attainment and personal development and plan work accordingly. The good match of work to individual need helps pupils do well, particularly in English and mathematics. Teachers do not include pupils sufficiently in planning for their own learning so as to help them understand better what they have to do to improve their work.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The leadership and management of the school are good. The governing body is exceptionally well informed and makes an outstanding contribution to the school's place in the community. The headteacher has vitalised the school. She has a clear vision of how to build on the many gains that have been achieved since the previous inspection. Staff and governors are keen to incorporate her ideas for further improvement. The management team has an accurate understanding of the school's strengths and of where the need for development remains. The school improvement

plan is very clear and provides a good basis for planning for the future and moving the school forward. There has already been a positive improvement in curriculum review to make time for more art and creative activities. The aspirations to increase challenge and raise the achievement levels of all pupils are an important part of the ethos of the school.

Shared subject leadership underpins the work of the school. Teachers' specialist skills are used in a sensitive way to maximise the contributions of teachers and skilled volunteers. Teachers analyse pupils' performance carefully and identify where each pupil can improve. As yet, pupils do not share sufficiently in planning their own path to learning. The governing body is fully aware of the need to hold the school to account. They are proud of their role in supporting the small staff and of taking an important part in planning for lifting the school to new heights.

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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
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

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?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The behaviour of learners	2
The attendance of learners	2
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	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	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.

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 performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1
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	1
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

Dent C of E Voluntary Aided Primary School

Laning

Dent

Sedbergh

Cumbria

LA10 5QJ

6 December 2006

Dear Pupils

Thank you for welcoming me to your school to see how you work and play with your friends and for letting me look at the work in your books. I enjoyed my visit very much, especially when you let me share your collective worship and when we went to see your gardening activities. It was good to see you working, even in the mud.

Your school is such a welcoming place; everyone feels at home. You know that already because you told me how much you enjoy school and all the activities that it offers you, especially the climbing wall and the meditation centre. I enjoyed seeing how well you worked with one another in lessons and when playing outside. Your understanding about healthy living and helping to care for the environment is better than that of many adults. You are developing into sensible and responsible young people who understand how to behave while still having fun, and how to live safe and healthy lives. You get pleasing results in your tests because you come to school every day, except when you are ill.

You are pleased with your increasing skills, particularly your writing and using computers. Your links with children in Togo are very interesting. I hope your support of them continues to go well. Some of you are quite capable of undertaking more responsibility for planning your own path for learning and developing ways of doing more independent work. I know that your teachers will find ways of giving you clear personal targets and help to make research tasks enjoyable. Planning investigations and experiments is good fun, as you showed me in science. Why not use your skills in reading, writing and ICT to find out new facts and tell your friends about what you have discovered? You and your teachers have some good ideas and plans for this work as you showed me in the grounds and in the library. It won't always be easy but you will feel so proud when it is your own unique work on display that is not like that of anyone else. Your teachers will be pleased to see you thinking for yourselves and will be ready to help you.

Thank you again for letting me share your ideas and seeing how proud you are of your school and how much you enjoy your work and play.

Heather Evans, Lead inspector