

Vicarage Park CofE Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	112269
Local Authority	Cumbria
Inspection number	337889
Inspection dates	25–26 February 2010
Reporting inspector	David Law

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	193
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Norma Bates
Headteacher	Miss Anne Hallam
Date of previous school inspection	18 April 2008
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. They spent 67% of their time looking at learning. Fifteen lessons were seen and seven different teachers were observed teaching. Inspectors held meetings with governors, staff and groups of pupils. They observed the school's work, and looked at the improvement plan, school policies and evidence from self-evaluation. Account was taken of teachers' curricular planning and their assessments of pupils' progress. Samples of pupils' books were also reviewed. In addition, 106 questionnaires returned from parents and carers were analysed, along with 18 returned by staff and 99 by pupils.

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

- the progress of pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities
- the quality of provision, particularly teaching and the use of assessment to plan learning for groups and individuals
- the effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation and the capacity for sustaining improvement.

Information about the school

This is a school of broadly average size. There is enhanced provision for up to 16 pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. These pupils come from Kendal and the surrounding area and their needs comprise profound and multiple learning difficulties and/or physical needs. As a result, the proportion of pupils with a statement of special educational needs is well above average. Otherwise, the proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is average. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is below average. There are few pupils from minority ethnic groups and very few who speak English as an additional language. The school has achieved the Activemark and the Healthy Schools Award. It has also received an Inclusion Award from the local authority.

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?

1

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

1

Main findings

Vicarage Park Church of England Primary is an outstanding school. By Year 6, pupils' attainment is high. Pupils are exceptionally proud of their many achievements and have excellent attitudes to learning. Pupils' enjoyment of learning is tremendous and, as a result, they make outstanding progress in learning and their personal development. The school meets the needs of all pupils exceedingly well because excellent assessment underpins outstanding teaching and a curriculum that is tailor-made to individuals and groups. The ethos is strongly inclusive and pupils' contribution to the school and the wider community is outstanding. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities receive excellent support and make outstanding progress. Skilful teaching assistants enhance this provision and also contribute to the excellent progress of all pupils. All pupils work and play in outstanding harmony, cooperating with each other very readily and showing considerable thought for others. Outstanding leadership permeates the highly effective teamwork among staff and the governing body and is based on a powerful commitment to the achievement of all pupils.

Pupils at risk of falling behind are given targeted support to help them learn well. More-able pupils receive the challenge required to make outstanding progress and learning is exceptionally well matched to their needs. As a result, the proportion attaining the higher levels expected of them by the end of Year 6 is above the national average. Pupils' eagerness to be at school is reflected in high levels of attendance. Excellent care, guidance and support promote pupils' learning and their well-being extremely well. All pupils feel entirely safe in school and good procedures for safeguarding pupils are in place. The needs of vulnerable pupils are exceedingly well met.

The headteacher secures the enthusiasm and commitment of staff and her high expectations of pupils are shared by all. Other leaders and governors are highly effective, the morale of staff is high and the school is imbued with a common purpose centred on ensuring high-quality teaching and learning. Partnerships with a range of agencies and other local links ensure that the school's promotion of community cohesions is good. Links that would enable pupils to learn more about others from a range of diverse backgrounds are not as well developed and the improvement plan recognises this by including it as a priority. The school has an outstanding capacity to sustain improvement. Self-evaluation is rigorous and the school knows itself thoroughly. Development plans are sharply focused. There is a relentless pursuit of excellence supported by robust performance management. Teaching and the curriculum have improved since the last inspection. Parents and carers are highly supportive. One summed it up by saying, 'This is an excellent school providing a high-quality education

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that meets our child's individual needs extremely well.'

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve pupils' knowledge and understanding of cultural diversity by developing links with other schools and communities with different traditions.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

1

In lessons, pupils make outstanding progress in their learning. They are tenacious learners and have high levels of concentration. Their ability to work cooperatively is excellent. Behaviour in the classroom and around the school is outstanding. This enables pupils to learn at a very brisk rate and acquire new skills and knowledge rapidly. When faced with problems to solve, for example in mathematics, pupils are very keen and persistent. Pupils make excellent progress in developing the skills that contribute to future economic well-being and apply these exceptionally well. For example, samples of their writing across a range of subjects frequently show evidence of the skills they have been taught and the understanding they have gained. In one Year 6 lesson pupils showed a deep understanding of the motives of the writer when studying the complex poetry of Wordsworth.

All groups of pupils, whatever their starting points and including those receiving enhanced provision, make outstanding progress. The school has sustained high attainment for some years. Where assessments show that pupils or groups could achieve more, targeted support is provided and better results follow. For example, the school allocated support for girls to achieve higher levels in mathematics and saw a clear rise in their attainment at the end of Year 6 in 2009. Pupils have a good knowledge of how to live healthily, for example by eating healthy food and enthusiastically participating in sports. Their eagerness to take responsibility is evident in their enthusiastic participation in the school council and many activities to raise funds for those in need. Pupils are exceptionally well prepared for the next stage of their education through their very well-developed personal skills and excellent attitudes and achievement.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

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

How effective is the provision?

The outstanding teaching is based on excellent relationships with pupils and on the exemplary use of assessment to plan learning that meets the full range of needs. This helps all pupils, including those receiving the enhanced provision, very well. Teachers' expectations are high. They challenge pupils to think and explain and this develops understanding and helps those learning English as an additional language. Lessons are exceptionally well organised and, as a result, teaching and learning move at a brisk pace. Teachers' explanations are clear and pupils know what they have to do and what will make them successful. Marking also tells pupils precisely what they should improve and targets for individuals and groups are used very effectively to promote learning.

The outstanding curriculum is exceedingly well organised to provide first-rate breadth and depth as well as relevant opportunity to study various themes. These captivate pupils' interest and they talk with great animation about the many visits and visitors that are part of school life. The local environment is used extremely well to promote learning; for example when pupils wrote of their visit to Dove Cottage and made careful pencil sketches of buildings in the town. Pupils are keen readers and have many opportunities to read widely; for example when researching the Second World War. Outstanding care, guidance and support enable pupils to make the best of their opportunities. The school is very effective in addressing barriers to learning for the most vulnerable. For example, pupils with complex special educational needs and/or disabilities receive excellent and carefully targeted support. Transition within the school, for example from Reception to Year 1, is very well organised so pupils have continuity of experience.

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These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	1
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	1
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

Leaders and managers at all levels share and promote a clear vision. The inspirational leadership of the headteacher secures a strong commitment from all staff. There is an unrelenting focus on sustaining high achievement and promoting the best possible outcomes for all pupils. Targets are ambitious and challenging yet attainable. The tracking of outcomes for pupils and their personal development is outstanding in its thoroughness and accuracy. This information is acted upon very effectively. This process ensures that no pupils are allowed to fall behind: support is exceedingly well matched to their needs. The priorities in the improvement plan are well chosen and tackled with energy. Progress is monitored robustly and evaluations are searching. Leaders are skilful in adjusting plans where priorities change. Governors hold leaders to account through regular contact with the school and the evidence they gather. The consistency of high-quality experiences for all pupils is a striking and key feature of the school's success. All pupils have equal opportunity to learn and the school is free of discrimination. Pupils have a secure understanding of how to keep safe and safeguarding procedures are good. The management of staff performance is well embedded; teaching has improved from good to outstanding since the last inspection. Although promoting community cohesion well, the school recognises that pupils would gain from even more contact with others from different backgrounds and cultures. Outcomes and value for money are outstanding. Good engagement with parents and carers enlists their support and one, reflecting the views of many, explained 'My child's education is interesting, varied and enjoyable and caters for his specific needs.'

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	1
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	1
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	1

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	
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	1
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	1

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children enter the Early Years Foundation Stage with skills broadly in line with those expected at this age, although a significant minority have communication and language abilities below what is typically expected. Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage is good with some outstanding features. All children make good progress in their learning and the majority enter Year 1 with attainment at and at times above expected levels. Children's personal development and well-being are outstanding. They show tremendous enjoyment in all they do. They quickly become confident, play harmoniously with others and learn how to be independent. They feel safe and secure and are fully confident that adults will listen carefully to them. Staff have a thorough knowledge of child development and excellent assessment enables learning to be matched to individual needs. Teaching is particularly effective in developing children's speaking and listening. There is a good balance between child-initiated and adult-led activities with resources being well organised. The outdoor learning environment has recently been improved but does not provide the same level of challenge and stimulus for learning as indoors. The unit is well led. Adults work well as a team and show exemplary commitment to children's well-being and learning. The Reception class takes children from eight different settings; liaison with these is well organised to ensure a smooth induction. Links with parents and carers are good; they value the provision their children receive. One said, 'My child's progress is remarkable. He is reading and writing incredibly well and is encouraged every step of the way.'

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 from a relatively high number of

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responses express high levels of support for the school. They feel their children enjoy school and are happy with their children's experience there. They agree teaching is good and that children are well prepared for the future. Inspectors agree overall, although judge the quality of teaching in Year 1 to Year 6 to be outstanding. A very small minority of parents and carers felt that the school did not deal effectively with unacceptable behaviour. Inspectors judged behaviour to be outstanding and saw none that was unacceptable. A similar minority of parents and carers felt they would like more help to support their children's learning. Inspectors felt that the school does provide good support to assist learning at home.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Vicarage Park C of E Primary 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 106 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 193 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	66	62	38	36	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	63	59	42	40	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	40	38	58	55	2	2	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	53	50	47	44	0	0	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	60	57	42	40	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	52	49	45	42	7	7	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	44	42	53	50	4	4	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)	42	40	57	54	1	1	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	50	47	48	45	3	3	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	35	33	54	51	9	8	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	32	30	62	58	5	5	1	1
The school is led and managed effectively	53	50	49	46	1	1	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	64	60	40	38	0	0	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 inspected between September 2007 and July 2008

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	39	58	3	0
Primary schools	13	50	33	4
Secondary schools	17	40	34	9
Sixth forms	18	43	37	2
Special schools	26	54	18	2
Pupil referral units	7	55	30	7
All schools	15	49	32	5

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 were reported in The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills 2007/08.

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.



01 March 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Vicarage Park C of E Primary School, Kendal, LA9 5BP

Thank you for contributing to the inspection by being eager to talk to us. The other inspectors and I thoroughly enjoyed our visit and you made us feel very welcome. We judge that your school provides you with an outstanding education.

You are rightly proud of your many achievements. You make outstanding progress in your learning. We saw that you always try your best. You show terrific enthusiasm in your lessons and told us how much you enjoy school. We know this because of your excellent attendance. You are very keen to take part in the many exciting trips, music activities and sports. We were impressed by your writing and judge you are making excellent progress with this. We enjoyed reading what you have written. Your behaviour is excellent. You get on well together and always try to be helpful to others. We found you exceedingly eager to take responsibility, for example in the school council. You like to keep healthy by taking exercise and eating the right foods. You told us you always feel safe in school and find the adults helpful. We judge that the adults care for you exceptionally well and are outstanding in helping you to learn. In the Reception class children thoroughly enjoy learning and make good progress. The leaders and managers of your school and all the governors are eager to keep on improving things for you.

We want the school to improve one thing. We would like to see more opportunity for you to learn even more about different communities in Britain and around the world.

I am fully confident that you will play your part in helping to bring about improvement by continuing to work hard and being so enthusiastic about your learning. It was a pleasure to visit your school. Best wishes for the future.

Yours sincerely

Mr David Law

Lead Inspector

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