

Derwent Vale Primary School and Nursery

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	112239
Local authority	Cumbria
Inspection number	337875
Inspection dates	3–4 March 2010
Reporting inspector	Mr John Heap

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	78
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Joe Holliday
Headteacher	Mrs Frances Edmondson
Date of previous school inspection	November 2006
School address	William Street Great Clifton Workington CA14 1WA
Telephone number	01900 325235
Fax number	01900 325236
Email address	admin@derwentvale.cumbria.sch.uk

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Royal Exchange Buildings
St Ann's Square
Manchester M2 7LA

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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. The inspectors visited eight lessons that were taught by five teachers. The proportion of inspection time spent looking at pupils' learning was around 50%. Meetings were held with governors, staff and groups of pupils. Inspectors observed the school's work and looked at a range of documentation, including the school improvement plan, reports from the local authority, the tracking of pupils' achievements and minutes of meetings held by the governing body. There were 24 questionnaires returned from parents and carers.

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

- attainment and achievement in writing and mathematics to determine whether teaching is sufficiently challenging
- how well the curriculum and leadership and management promote community cohesion
- the quality of target-setting to raise attainment and whether the marking and other feedback from staff is closely related
- whether the governing body has improved the quality of its monitoring and evaluation work.

Information about the school

This small primary school serves a mainly White British population and has a very small group of pupils from other ethnic heritages. The proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals varies from year to year, but is around the average. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities varies year on year and is, currently, broadly average. The school has gained Healthy Schools and Activemark status.

Extended provision includes before- and after-school clubs. The school also hosts a children's centre which is supportive of parents' and carers' needs.

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

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

This is a good school that is much appreciated by pupils, parents and carers alike. As a result, the school is thriving and numbers are rising. A typical view expressed by a parent is, 'A well-run school – staff very professional but also approachable.' Improved and successful monitoring procedures have provided the school with an accurate view of its qualities, such as the good monitoring of teaching and learning, and areas for development. Effective governance plays a full part in this and this is a good improvement since the last inspection. All partners work successfully together to enable the school to progress well and show that it has a good capacity to improve further.

Overall, outcomes for pupils are good. Pupils achieve well from the below average attainment they have when they enter the Early Years Foundation Stage (Nursery and Reception). Skills and abilities are particularly weak in writing at this stage and continue to be so through other year groups. The school effectively tackles this weakness through good improvement planning, good teaching and the good tracking of pupils' progress so that those pupils needing extra support are identified and given the help they need. By the end of Key Stage 2 attainment is average and pupils have achieved well and made good progress. This is also true of the more-able pupils, but expectations of these pupils are not high enough for them to use their writing and mathematics skills in a broader and more challenging way.

Pupils have a good knowledge and understanding of the local community and they have opportunities to make a good contribution through links with the older people in the locality and a nearby special school. However, pupils are not as aware of the culturally diverse areas nationally and globally and this means their cultural development is no more than satisfactory. The school is keenly aware of the need to focus more sharply on this and provide many more opportunities for pupils to learn about diversity and to link with other cultures.

Teachers deal well with their mixed-age classes. Lessons are well organised so that they cater for differing levels of maturity, age and ability. Pupils know their learning targets and the good marking and verbal guidance keeps them on track. However, the targets for, and marking of, the more-able pupils' work do not raise expectations as high as they could be.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise expectations for the more-able pupils, particularly in writing and mathematics by:
 - ensuring that targets are very challenging
 - using excellent marking practices to inform pupils of their achievements and what they need to do next
 - increasing the opportunities for their good skills to be used in other subjects, investigations and problem solving.

- Increase pupils' knowledge and understanding of cultural issues, particularly those of a national and global nature by:
 - providing more opportunities for pupils to make contact with diverse cultures
 - improving the promotion of community cohesion beyond the school and its local community.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

In the majority of lessons observed, pupils achieved well and enjoyed what they were doing. They showed good attitudes to school and developed very strong relationships. Their behaviour was good and resulted in a positive climate for learning. Pupils settled well in lessons and usually concentrated hard.

Attainment on entry varies, but has generally been below average. Communication skills have been the weakest, particularly in early reading and writing. By the end of Key Stage 1, standards have often been below average. However, in 2009, results in national assessments improved to average and the current picture looks similar. By the end of Key Stage 2, national test results show that attainment is average and rising. In the 2009 national tests targets were exceeded. The more-able pupils do better in mathematics and science than they do in English, mainly because of shortcomings in writing. However, in the current Year 6 the more-able pupils are well on track to reach the higher than average Level 5 in writing. The progress of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those from minority ethnic groups is good. In fact there is evidence of pupils who were below average at the end of Key Stage 1 reaching average attainment by the end of Key Stage 2.

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory overall. Moral and social development is strong and this leads to good behaviour, courtesy and respect for others and an appreciation by pupils of what the school is doing for them. Pupils have a clear idea of what is right and wrong. However, despite knowing a lot about their local culture, they do not have as keen an understanding of other cultures and the diversity of lifestyles in this country and globally. Attendance is average. Pupils know that a healthy lifestyle is important and they enjoy the regular and daily exercise regime (activate). They talk about the benefits of a good, balanced diet. Pupils are keen to work and play with others and welcome newcomers warmly. As one pupil put it, '... because we're one family we all care.' Pupils make a satisfactory contribution to school and community life. The school council is a

relatively new initiative and the contribution it makes is sound. Pupils' good use of basic skills and their good social awareness means that they are well placed for their future schooling and the world of work.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	3
The extent to which pupils develop skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3

How effective is the provision?

Work is mostly matched to the individual needs of pupils and promotes good progress. Teachers make good use of resources, including information and communication technology, to engage and motivate pupils. In the Key Stage 2 class the teacher skilfully drew all pupils into discussion about writing in the style of a news reporter by asking questions that engaged pupils with a wide range of maturity and abilities. This type of high-quality interaction is one of the main reasons why standards in writing are improving by the end of Year 6, particularly for the more able pupils. Effective use is made of 'talk partners' to encourage the sharing of ideas. The marking of work is very largely purposeful, linked to lesson objectives and helps pupils to identify what they need to do to improve further. However, the marking of writing does not always provide the more-able pupils with the challenge they need to make even better progress.

The curriculum is satisfactory with good enrichment activities, such as a good range of visits and visitors. All pupils benefit equally from what the school offers. Provision for developing basic writing skills, such as spelling, is much better than at the time of the last inspection. However, there are still further opportunities missed for the more-able pupils to use their writing skills more regularly in other subjects. The curriculum strongly meets the needs of pupils in relation to their personal, social and health needs. The modification of the curriculum for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is effective and promotes their good progress. The school rightly recognises that pupils' cultural development is very much embedded in the local community and that their knowledge and understanding of the diverse nature of society is underdeveloped. Moreover, there are missed opportunities for the older,

¹The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low

more able pupils to engage in longer-term studies which include planning activities, investigating ideas, solving problems and researching facts.

Staff know pupils and their families very well. Parents and carers, and pupils, are satisfied that the school is a secure and safe place to be. Monitoring procedures and practices for attendance and behaviour are good. Arrangements for pupils moving to new classes are good and this results in them settling quickly. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities are well supported and effective communication between staff, parents and carers, and external agencies ensures that these pupils receive appropriate support. Pupils receive good guidance about their academic and social development and well-being.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account:	
The use of assessment to support learning	2
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	3
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher is well regarded by the whole school community for her strong leadership. She receives good support from key staff, who share with her the vision for higher standards and improved provision. The school's view of itself is accurate. This is particularly clear in the effective monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning. It is obvious from the written comments made that it is pupils' progress that is the main factor in the judgement about teaching. The school has good practices in place for finding out the views of parents and carers and providing feedback. The linked children's centre has brought parents and carers into the school and provided good support and guidance on how they can help in their children's learning and well-being.

Sound safeguarding procedures and practices meet requirements. Governors are well informed about the school and make a significant contribution to many parts of its work. This is often done through monitoring visits and good links with subject coordinators. The school understands its religious, ethnic and socio-economic context and has developed an awareness of this in its pupils. They regularly raise money both for local and national charities. As yet, the school has not provided pupils with a good understanding of how some national and global communities differ from their own. The school promotes equal opportunities well and issues relating to discrimination are successfully dealt with in good personal, social and health education lessons and assemblies. All pupils have access to the range of clubs and activities offered. Pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds work and play harmoniously with their peers and each pupil's personal and academic progress is well tracked.

These are the grades for the leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	2
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	3
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children join the Nursery with attainment that is below expectations for three-year-olds. They get an effective start in the Early Years Foundation Stage and make good progress. Strengths include the good quality of teaching, the strong provision and the secure learning environment. By the time they enter Year 1 most children are securely working within the learning goals set for their age.

Arrangements for children starting in the Early Years Foundation Stage are good and result in children settling quickly. Because the children have weak communication skills an early focus is on developing their speaking and listening skills, particularly in learning their letters and sounds. Writing skills are also very weak. The practitioners skilfully provide children with opportunities to do some early writing, often in areas where other activities are going on, such as the construction area. There is a good balance of activities, with children encouraged to choose their own play, such as in the outdoor hairdressing salon. The children drew up a simple appointment timetable so that they could cater for all who wanted to take part. Occasionally, practitioners do too much for children. For example, at snack time children were provided with fruit and milk rather than choosing and collecting them independently. The assessment of children’s skills and abilities is good. It provides a rounded view of the children and points to future learning activities. Leadership and management are satisfactory because the leading practitioner is relatively new to the post and still learning about the position.

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 in the Early Years Foundation Stage	3

Views of parents and carers

Most of the parents and carers who returned questionnaires are satisfied with the work done by the school. All say that their children enjoy school, are kept safe, make good progress and are taught well. Comments from parents and carers are supportive of the school's leadership and management and the 'family' atmosphere in the school. A very small minority rightly consider that the more-able pupils could be challenged more.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Derwent Vale Primary School and Nursery 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 inspector received 24 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 78 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	16	67	8	33	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	19	79	5	21	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	16	67	8	33	0	0	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	13	54	11	46	0	0	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	16	67	8	33	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	11	46	12	50	0	0	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	11	46	13	54	0	0	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)	12	50	6	25	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	14	58	9	38	0	0	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	10	42	14	58	0	0	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	13	54	11	46	0	0	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	17	71	7	29	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	18	75	6	25	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 all 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 pupils' 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.



5 March 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Derwent Vale Primary School and Nursery, Workington, CA14 1WA

On behalf of the team, may I thank you all for making us so welcome when we recently visited your good school. You told us that you enjoy coming to school and I was impressed by your knowledge and understanding of the importance of plenty of exercise and a proper diet in keeping healthy. You clearly feel safe and secure and we noted that you get on well with each other and the staff. I think that the peer mentors do a good job in helping the younger children.

These are some of the things your school does well.

- Most lessons are lively and interesting and you do well and want to learn.
- You get on very well with each other and the staff and behave well.
- You go on interesting visits, have visitors to help your learning and you really enjoy your after-school clubs.
- There are good checks made on how your work is developing.
- The school is well run and all the teachers work together to help you to improve.

Here are the things that will help your school be even better and where you can be very helpful.

- I would like the more-able pupils to do even better work in writing and mathematics by responding well to difficult challenges set by your teachers, following the improved guidance your teachers will provide for you so that you improve your skills further and using your skills more in other subjects.
- I have asked the school to give you more opportunities to learn about the different ways of life and traditions of people who live in Britain and further afield.

Very best wishes for the future.

Yours sincerely

Mr John Heap
Lead inspector

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