

Dent CofE Voluntary Aided Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	112331
Local authority	Cumbria
Inspection number	337904
Inspection dates	18–19 January 2010
Reporting inspector	Mr David Byrne

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary Aided School
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	28
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs K Cairns
Headteacher	Mrs P Summers
Date of previous school inspection	December 2006
School address	Laning Dent Sedbergh LA10 5QJ
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Age group	4–11
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one additional inspector. The inspector spent 50 percent of his time looking at learning. He saw three teachers and eight lessons and held meetings with governors, staff and pupils. The school's work was observed and some documentation was scrutinised including the school improvement plan, the minutes of the governing body meetings, assessment and tracking records, and safeguarding policies and documents. The views of 14 parents expressed in their questionnaires were taken into account together with the views of pupils.

The inspector reviewed many aspects of the school's work and looked in detail at the following:

- whether progress is good enough to ensure that that pupils do as well as they can
- whether the information from assessment is used efficiently to set individual targets to help pupils improve their own learning
- the effectiveness of the school in monitoring the school's performance and its use in setting priorities for school improvement.

Information about the school

This is a very small school in a rural village. Over a half of the pupils rely on school transport. The percentage of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is above average. All pupils are of White British backgrounds. The proportion eligible for free school meals is below average. The school has been successful in gaining the Healthy School Award in recognition of its efforts to support healthy lifestyles and an Activemark for the quality of its sports provision. The school gained the standard for Financial Management in Schools. The village Nursery is housed in part of the school building and is separately managed. It was not part of this inspection.

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 in which pupils develop secure academic skills and become mature young citizens. Excellent links with the local community benefit the pupils' education as well as considerably enriching village life. A close family atmosphere permeates the school and this, coupled with lively and generally motivated pupils, contributes to excellent behaviour at all times. Pupils are very happy, safe and secure and their love of school is reflected in high rates of attendance. Some of the outcomes in relation to pupils' personal qualities are outstanding.

A dedicated headteacher and experienced staff provide good care for all pupils. Lessons promote good learning and are enhanced by a wide range of activities to enrich learning beyond the standard curriculum. Effective links with nearby schools enable pupils to participate in a wide variety of sports and widens their options for after-school activities. These contribute to the pupils' excellent understanding of how to live safe and healthy lives. Educational visits, for example, to the Settle-Dent railway line, broaden pupils' knowledge of the local history of the area and makes learning relevant to their lives. The many strengths in the curriculum, however, are not yet fully exploited. This is because plans for linking subjects are not yet fully refined to reflect the pupils' interests and enable them to use their basic skills of literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT) in a range of subjects.

Teaching is good. Lessons are generally well prepared to meet the range of needs in the mixed-age classes. As a result, the majority of pupils make good progress as they move through the school to reach average standards by the end of Year 6. Pupils generally do well in reading and mathematics, but at times the more-able could do better, most noticeably in writing. Good initiatives are in place to support pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Staff know each pupil very well, both in terms of their academic and personal qualities. Pupils are given targets to aim for in literacy and numeracy, but their involvement in this process varies and expectations are not always high enough which reduces the achievement of the more-able. Some procedures for recording assessment information throughout the school are unnecessarily detailed and hinder an efficient analysis of the data.

The school is well managed and governed. A strong staff team embraces the outcomes of mostly accurate evaluations of the school so that effective strategies are employed to aid improvement. Since the last inspection, the school has moved forward, for example, by strengthening the provision in the Early Years Foundation

stage and improving aspects of teaching reading and writing. Given the progress made and current successes, the school has a good capacity to develop further in the future.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve pupils' attainment, particularly in writing, by the end of Year 6, by:
 - improving the quality of curriculum planning, so that pupils' interests are more closely reflected and they have more opportunities to apply their basic skills in a range of subjects
 - consistently involving pupils in evaluating their own achievement in a wider range of subjects, so that the more-able pupils in particular are consistently challenged to do better in writing.

- Streamline the amount of detail recorded about pupils' progress so that achievement and progress can be more efficiently monitored.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

1

Pupils usually have excellent attitudes to learning in lessons and display good levels of enjoyment in lessons. They are confident and capable learners. For example, during a lesson in which pupils explored ideas related to using their knowledge of times tables, they showed considerable concentration to think through different ways of solving number problems. Attainment, varies considerably from year-to-year being very much influenced by the nature of each year group, the numbers of which are often very small. In some groups, one pupil equates to as much as one third, statistically. Nevertheless, attainment is average by the end of Year 6, which represents good progress. The school is working to raise pupils' attainment, particularly for the more-able in writing. However, it is too early to see the full impact of its actions. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities do well benefiting from good quality support and guidance.

Pupils are good representatives for their school. They are naturally caring and support each other and show an interest in others besides themselves. Pupils are frequently involved in community life, for example, when participating in the annual pantomime, and in contributing their ideas to refurbish a play area as part of the Parish Council plan. Considerable sums of money are voluntarily raised by pupils for others less fortunate than themselves. Their views influences aspects of school life, for example, the school council has contributed to improving the quality of school lunches and the playground facilities. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Pupils have a good understanding of right and wrong, form excellent relationships with others and have an excellent understanding of their own culture. They develop a reasonable understanding of other faiths, although their first-hand experience of people of cultures other than their own is relatively limited.

These are the grades for pupils'/children's outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
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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	1
Pupils' behaviour	1
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	1
The extent to which pupils develop skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance	1
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

Teachers and support staff make many effective efforts to meet the needs of each pupil in the mixed-aged classes. The skills of permanent staff are supplemented by a number of outside specialists, for example, in sport, music, the arts and dance. In the large majority of lessons, pupils' progress and learning are good. Teachers have a very secure knowledge and understanding of each pupil and use this information effectively to direct questions and activities to challenge individuals. At times, imaginative use is made of interactive whiteboards to focus pupils' attention but the quality of such use varies between classes. Assessment procedures are in the process of being refined because information collected is often over complicated and hard to analyse. Some good procedures are developing in monitoring pupils' progress in reading and mathematics; in writing, pupils are increasingly aware of how they can improve. However, assessment is not yet fully effective. Since the last inspection, pupils have become much more involved in setting their own targets for improvement, but the quality is variable and does not always challenge pupils enough.

The curriculum meets the needs of pupils both academically and in their personal development. Recent adaptations to the way in which subjects are planned have boosted pupils' enjoyment of learning. Subjects are increasingly linked together to make lessons more relevant, resulting in pupils using their basic skills of literacy, numeracy and ICT in a variety of circumstances. Where this has been done well, for example, as part of the Victorian study linked to local railway life, pupils have been motivated to write at a higher standard and to read with greater enthusiasm. Such initiatives remain fairly new and are not yet sufficiently embedded in the school's work to get the very best from pupils. Initiatives taken to boost reading are increasing pupils' interest, particularly that of boys, and are also starting to raise the attainment of the more-able writers in Key Stage 2. Lessons are enriched by a wide range of additional activities that enable pupils to develop sporting prowess, participate in drama, dance and music and also to gain an insight into the importance of mental well-being, for example, through participating in yoga sessions. Much of this very good provision is a consequence of excellent links with the local community and nearby schools. Educational visits rate very highly amongst pupils

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

with the residential stays, for example, camping at Windermere and the opportunities to visit local museums such as Farfield Mill.

Pupils benefit from a very caring and safe environment. Each pupil is known by staff and any concerns are picked up immediately and acted on. Those with special educational needs and/or disabilities receive well targeted support, which is based on good diagnostic assessments. Their progress is carefully monitored and effective and sensitive support given where required. Effective links with outside agencies enable the use of specialists where needed. Much attention is given to encouraging pupils to be safe and live healthily, which helps them to be happy and fit young people in the future. Procedures for supporting the most-able vary and are not consistent.

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	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher has a clear vision for the school's development. Good procedures for monitoring all aspects of the school's provision are established and all staff are increasingly involved. This has effectively guided school improvement. Areas of strength, such as the exceptionally strong community links, are being maintained, but a culture of looking outwards is now established. This is benefitting the quality of the school's provision by broadening the knowledge and experience of staff and enabling pupils to mix with others from different locations. The school effectively promotes equality of opportunity. It is very aware of the needs of boys and girls and the good support for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities enables them to be fully included in all aspects of school life.

Underpinning the school's success is a strong and caring governing body. It knows the school well and works hard to support the staff and pupils and is increasingly aware of the need to manage the headteacher's work-life balance. Finances are carefully managed, and a strategic view is maintained of budgetary planning to adjust to changes in the number of pupils on roll. All statutory requirements regarding safeguarding are rigorously complied with; they ensure a realistic and proportionate approach to safety and child protection that influences all aspects of school life.

Partnerships with the community are excellent and the school makes a very significant contribution to cohesion within the local area. Significant additional funds are provided through the Friends of Dent which make a real difference to aspects of provision. Parents are very supportive and loyal to the school and excellent relationships exist with them. Good communications, such as a termly report in Key Stage 2 is provided for each child and parents are welcome at all times to meet staff whenever they feel the need. The school is dedicated to promoting community

cohesion. The school sponsors children abroad and is in the process of developing links with schools representing different cultures.

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	1
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children settle well in the caring and secure environment. Very close links with the village nursery makes the transition for children from part-time to full-time learning seamless. Well deployed staff ensure that the needs of children are met. Children's skills when they enter and leave Reception vary significantly according to the nature and the very small size of each group. Nevertheless, they make good progress from their starting points and are well prepared for their transition to Year 1.

Children are given good opportunities to learn and all aspects of the curriculum are covered well. Teaching is effective as a result of a good partnership between teaching and support staff. Activities indoors are well tailored to children's needs but while outdoor learning is provided, the location reduces the opportunities for children to choose freely when they learn outside. However, to compensate staff make good use of the local environment to widen the children's learning, for example, building dens on the school field and using the outdoor areas for a 'Bear Hunt'. Staff know each child very well and keep many accurate records to support their judgements. Some of these are, however, over detailed; this hinders the efficiency of monitoring achievement and progress. The provision is well led and managed and the involvement of parents is very much valued. There is a very strong partnership between school and parents, many of whom give regular support with learning at home. Children's safety and welfare is given a high priority.

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	2

Views of parents and carers

The large majority of parents support the school and are happy with the quality of education their children receive. They value the care the school provides and parents almost all feel that their children are happy at school. Most strongly support the assertion that their children do well academically although a few feel that at times more could be asked of the more-able pupils. The inspection findings confirm the parents' positive views and feel that there are occasions when higher expectations could be made of pupils.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Dent CofE Voluntary Aided 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 inspector received 14 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 28 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	10	71	3	21	1	7	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	11	79	3	21	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	9	64	5	36	0	0	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	7	50	6	43	1	7	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	7	50	7	50	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	8	57	6	43	0	0	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	9	64	5	36	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)	7	50	4	29	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	8	57	5	36	1	7	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	7	50	7	50	0	0	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	7	50	7	50	0	0	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	9	64	5	36	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	8	57	6	43	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>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.



20 January 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Dent CofE Voluntary Aided Primary School, Sedbergh, LA10 5QJ

It was a pleasure to spend two days with you when I came to inspect your school. I found you all very friendly, helpful and very good company. Your behaviour is excellent and I was very impressed by your excellent understanding of how to stay fit and healthy.

You benefit from being in a good school. Some of your personal qualities, such as your behaviour, are excellent. Your headteacher works tirelessly with all staff to make your school a better place. The new building has improved your quality of education and the many new ideas to help you do better in reading and writing are more fun and are improving how well you do. You make good progress in your time in the school and are all well prepared for moving on to your next stage of education.

You talked with great excitement about the many educational visits you have and activities such as yoga and sports clubs. These really do make school fun. The way you help the community is exceptional and the village really values all that you do.

There are some things that I judge the school could do even better. I have asked it to continue to work with you to find topics that you will really enjoy learning and to give you more chances to use your skills of literacy, numeracy and ICT in different subjects. I have also asked the teachers to give more challenging work to those of you who find some work easier and to streamline the amount of information they record about your progress.

I hope you all continue to enjoy school and work together to make it an even better place in which to learn. I send all of you my best wishes for the future.

Yours sincerely,

David Byrne
Lead inspector

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