

Ravenstonedale Endowed School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	112268
Local Authority	Cumbria
Inspection number	310833
Inspection date	13 May 2008
Reporting inspector	Sonja Oyen HMI

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 on roll	
School	35
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Alison Morriss
Headteacher	Mrs Janet Tringham
Date of previous school inspection	1 September 2004
School address	Ravenstonedale Kirkby Stephen Cumbria CA17 4NQ
Telephone number	01539 623670
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors.

Description of the school

This is a small village school, five miles west of Kirkby Stephen. Pupils come from a range of social backgrounds and many travel some distance from surrounding hamlets and farms. All are White British. A small number of pupils take a free school meal. Only a few pupils join the school each year. When pupils start in the reception year, their knowledge and skills are generally typical for their age. In the school as a whole, the proportion of pupils identified as having learning difficulties and/or disabilities is higher than average. There are no pupils with statements of special educational need.

The numbers in each year group vary. All 14 pupils in the Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1 are together in one class, and the 21 pupils in Key Stage 2 are in another. The headteacher has a teaching commitment and three other teachers work with classes on a part time basis. Ravenstonedale is part of the Upper Eden Extended Schools cluster along with five other primaries and Kirkby Stephen Grammar School Sports College.

During the inspection, two trainee teachers were on placement in the school.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Ravenstonedale justifies its good local reputation because it is at the heart of the community, and pupils benefit from being part of a school and village family. Parents rightly appreciate the school's key strengths in valuing each pupil as an individual, fostering confidence and self esteem, and in working with other schools, agencies and local people to provide a good curriculum. As one parent summed it up, 'Although small, it offers many varied activities and experiences'.

Overall, the school provides a sound education. Standards are broadly average and pupils' achievement is satisfactory. Their progress is variable and not all pupils have fulfilled the potential evident at the start of the year. Most pupils are working close to or at the level expected for their age; there is little high attainment. This is partly because the teachers' expectations of pupils' performance are not high enough. Teaching, although satisfactory overall, does not have the urgency and vitality needed to push on pupils' learning. Older pupils commented that they could do more. Teachers' marking, although improved since the last inspection, does not alert pupils consistently to what they need to do to improve. Some targets set for pupils earlier in the year have not been reviewed and pupils are unclear about what is expected of them. Teachers have a fairly accurate picture of how well each pupil is doing and provide extra support for those that need help to catch up. As this has not always been focused sharply enough on specific gaps in learning or linked to clear targets, not all pupils have benefited as much as they should.

Pastoral care is good. Staff give high consideration to pupils' welfare and as a consequence, pupils' personal development is good. Pupils and adults know each other well and there is mutual concern, care and interest in how each is doing. The staff seek help from specialist agencies for pupils with particular needs and work with pupils and their families to resolve any concerns. Pupils know what is expected of them. They are interested in learning, welcome a challenge, and, during the inspection, behaved very well. Pupils like being at school because they have lots of friends. Their good attendance also reflects their good health and fitness. Most pupils are articulate and quite mature for their age especially in their awareness of local and environmental issues, such as recycling and the need to create wildlife areas.

The quality of leadership and management and the school's capacity to improve are satisfactory. Steps to make a difference, such as those to develop pupils' skills in writing, have laid a sound foundation for further improvement. Governors, headteacher and staff pull together to ensure the school offers the widest provision it can. They were accurate in their judgements of some aspects of the school's effectiveness but generous in others. This is largely because the school has not been monitoring or evaluating rigorously enough the quality of teaching and its impact on pupils' learning.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 3

The youngest children get off to a sound start especially in personal, social and emotional development. Parents rightly value the way their children settle quickly into the school family, grow in confidence and enjoy their days. As one parent put it, 'My child has come on leaps and bounds'. The children are willing and keen to learn. They were intrigued by the green footprints and letter left by a Martian visitor, and had lots of ideas of how to use packets and bottles to

create rockets and a Martian landscape. Sessions are well planned and linked to the class theme. The school makes good use of the outdoors as part of learning experiences, and the children benefit from working with the older ones and from taking part in visits linked to topics. The 'This is me' book and staff's ongoing records, including photographs and samples of work, show each child's progress in the six areas of learning. By the end of the Reception year, the children are broadly working at the level expected for their age. They have made a start in reading, writing and can solve simple number problems using mathematical signs.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve.
- Inject greater drive and vitality into the teaching for all pupils.
- Set clear targets for pupils and tell them precisely through marking and feedback what they need to do to achieve them.
- Be rigorous in monitoring and evaluating critically:
 - the effectiveness of teaching on pupils' learning
 - the action taken to improve pupils' performance.
- Develop pupils' independence as learners.

A small proportion of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

As the number of pupils in each year group is so small, it is inappropriate to compare the school's results in tests and assessments with national figures. However, the school's data over the last years shows the younger pupils doing better year on year but the older pupils not always achieving as well as they should, especially in English. Pupils with particular learning needs generally make steady progress in meeting their targets, but some are slow to make up ground. Current standards are broadly average. Pupils have moved on satisfactorily over the year but not always as much as they could.

The use of stimuli, including, for example, luggage labels and letters from Martians, has boosted pupils' willingness to put their ideas on paper. However, older pupils need reminding to use paragraphs and correct sentence punctuation. Standards of presentation vary, with some work not as neat as it was earlier in the year. By Year 6, in mathematics, pupils have a sound understanding of the four rules of number and use different strategies, such as rounding up, to estimate, solve and check calculations. They also know how to conduct and record a fair scientific investigation.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Throughout the school, pupils' confidence and self-sufficiency are tangible. Everyone knows everyone else and pupils say they feel safe and secure. They are polite to visitors, know who to turn to if there is a problem and are not backward in voicing opinions. They know school routines, organise themselves with minimal fuss and apply themselves with a will especially when the task catches their interest. At playtimes during the inspection, they relished being outdoors and made good use of the balls and ropes, or chose to be in the garden area while

eating fruit and chatting to friends. Despite the limited space, girls and boys played a competitive game of football without annoying others. They were very proud that several pupils had been winners in a gymnastics competition. Pupils have a good sense of community responsibility; they are aware of local culture, such as the Appleby Horse Fair and the farming year. They have designed plans for the wildlife area and playground in the village and run the school's recycling and composting schemes. There was a good response to the school council's requests for old clothes to raise funds for the air ambulance. Strong personal qualities and sound competence in computing, literacy and numeracy set pupils up well for secondary education.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

The teaching is not consistently strong enough to drive on pupils' learning and ensure that all pupils achieve as well as they might. Comments from pupils and responses to questionnaires indicate that pupils know they could do more if pushed. Staff are caring, create a bright environment and celebrate what pupils have done. Less is done to ensure that pupils have easy access to the key things they need to remember about current learning in reading, writing, mathematics and science. Sessions are thoughtfully planned, often around interesting activities for different groups of pupils at an appropriate level of difficulty, but some teaching lacks 'oomph'. Pupils do not always complete their work or go into aspects at sufficient depth to ensure productive learning. Although the teachers share the purpose of the lesson with pupils, it is sometimes too wide to enable pupils to reflect on what they have actually learnt. Not all practices introduced at the start of the school year have been upheld. These include the setting of targets, the use of home/school books, and marking to tell pupils what they need to do to improve. As a result, not all pupils have a clear view of their progress and what they should be achieving.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

Over the year, all pupils participate in a good range of experiences, activities and themes. All go on visits, use the village's sporting facilities, are coached by specialists and work with community volunteers in after school clubs and school activities. They play their part in local events, including the compilation of articles for newsletters and fundraising. During the inspection day, several pupils had lessons in how to play the guitar and violin, and almost half the school took part in an after school drama club.

The school makes good use of national guidance to aid planning in key subjects for mixed age classes with a strong emphasis on developing younger pupils' knowledge of letters and sounds. The school is also keeping pace with curricular developments and moving increasingly towards the use of topics to link subjects. Topics are often enlivened by visitors; a good example was when younger pupils met Florence Nightingale and investigated the contents of a medical chest.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

The overall quality is satisfactory because the quality of academic care, guidance and support is not as good as that of pastoral care. All required safeguarding procedures are in place and

the headteacher is assiduous in acting on concerns and in following agreed procedures, such as those to deal with reported incidents of bullying. Staff work with pupils to set personal targets and provide regular opportunities for them to share aspects of their life in and out of school.

The analysis of data about pupils' performance and progress from regular tests and assessments is used to plan support for pupils who do not make the progress they should, and for those who need an extra challenge to do really well. However, this is piecemeal rather than an orchestrated, ongoing programme linked to target setting, focussed teaching and marking to help pupils improve.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The headteacher sets the tone for a warm, friendly Ravenstonedale family. The school is open and welcoming to villagers, other visitors and trainee teachers. It is very much at the heart of the local community. As the only full time teacher, the headteacher works well with her team of teachers and well qualified teaching assistants to pool expertise and ideas, and provide personal and professional support. The school has acted on the points raised in the last inspection but there is work still to do to ensure that effective steps become an integral part of everyday practice and every pupil achieves really well.

Governance is satisfactory. The governing body's pride in the school was evident in the presence in school and support given to staff by the chair of governors throughout the inspection day. Governors have a good overview of school events, the curriculum, management and financial affairs but they have not called the school to full account for the variations in pupils' performance over the last years. Minutes of meetings do not indicate how well they have questioned whether action taken has had the desired impact. The school improvement plan has few specific success criteria linked to the quality of teaching and pupils' performance to guide this process of evaluation. There has been little monitoring of the quality of teaching and learning this school year. As a result, chances have been missed to focus on aspects that could lead to increasing consistency and strengthening quality.

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Annex A

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?	3
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	3

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	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	2
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?	3
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?	3

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.

Annex A

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	3
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3
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

14 May 2008

Dear Children

Inspection of Ravenstonedale Endowed School, Cumbria

Thank you for being so friendly when I came to see how well you are learning. It was good to talk to the Year 6 children. I agree with them, and with your parents, that there are many interesting things for you to do in and out of school! I enjoyed looking at the photographs of where you had been and what you had done over the last years. You have some intriguing visitors too - I wonder what the children in Class 1 put in their letters to answer Zurg the Martian's questions!

One of the beauties of going to a small school is that you know everyone and I could see that you all get on well together, helping one another, sharing ideas and willingly carrying out jobs in and around the school. I was struck by how confident and self assured you are!

At Ravenstonedale you get a satisfactory education and generally do as well as I would expect for your age. However, I know you could make faster progress and reach higher standards. I have asked the governors, Mrs Tringham and teachers to up the pace and the challenge. If they are to make the teaching and your learning the best it can be, you can help by telling them when the work is too easy or too hard, and when you find it really exciting or a little bit boring. I have also asked the teachers to look at how they can enable you to learn more on your own. Part of this will be to make sure that you know exactly what to do to improve your work and have clear targets which are updated when you have achieved them.

Lastly, I have asked the governors and all teachers to look more carefully and critically at what they do to decide how well it helps you to move on in your learning.

I am sure that you will all want to help to make Ravenstonedale the best it can be, and I wish you well for the future.

Mrs Sonja Øyen

Her Majesty's Inspector