

Dean Gibson Catholic Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	112341
Local authority	Cumbria
Inspection number	378470
Inspection dates	15–16 November 2011
Reporting inspector	Naomi Taylor

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	157
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Sean Cafferty
Headteacher	Norah Mercer
Date of previous school inspection	10 May 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. Thirteen lessons were seen and seven teachers observed. Meetings were held with groups of parents, representatives of the governing body and staff. Inspectors spoke to parents and to key partners with which the school works. Inspectors observed the school's work and looked at a range of documentation including pupils' work, monitoring and assessment records, minutes of governing body meetings, school improvement planning, and curriculum and lesson plans. Inspectors analysed 74 questionnaires from parents and carers, together with a sample from pupils and staff

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at a number of key areas.

- Is the information on pupils' progress used effectively to ensure that all pupils are fully challenged, particularly boys and the more able?
- Does the curriculum provide enough opportunities to develop literacy, numeracy, and information and communication technology (ICT) skills?
- How effective are leaders and managers at all levels in driving and sustaining improvement, particularly in mathematics?
- How effective is the use of the outdoor learning space for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage?

Information about the school

Dean Gibson Catholic Primary School is a smaller than average primary school serving a wide area. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is below average. Most pupils are White British but there are a few pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds. The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is below the national average. There has been an increase in the proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities and this is now higher than the national average.

Since the last inspection a new governing body has been formed. There have also been significant and unavoidable changes to staffing in recent years. The headteacher was unavoidably absent for a significant part of the last academic year. The school holds many awards, the most recent being Healthy School status, Eco-School and International Award. The school is part of a Creative Partnership and the recently formed Kendal Community Partnership.

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

Dean Gibson is a good school where there is a strong ethos of respecting and valuing each other. The quality of pupils' contribution to the school and the wider community is good. They have an exceptionally good understanding of knowing right from wrong and very well-developed social skills. Older pupils willingly take on responsibilities and provide role models for the younger children. This results in outstanding behaviour in and around school where pupils are supportive and considerate to each other and to the adults around them. This leads to the pupils saying that they feel extremely safe in their school. The majority of pupils are involved in extra-curricular activities which make a significant contribution to the development of pupils' personal and social skills and their enjoyment of school. The school's promotion of community cohesion is good. Pupils gain a good understanding of communities and cultures which are different to their own. The good care and support afforded to all pupils ensure they feel part of a family community.

From starting points that are generally in line with those expected for their age, children settle very quickly into the Early Years Foundation Stage where provision is outstanding. Provision for outdoor learning has been improved and now matches the high-quality indoor provision although the improvements are too recent to have impacted fully on children's learning and progress. Children make good progress, as do pupils in Key Stages 1 and 2. By the time they leave school attainment in recent years has generally been above national averages. However, the results at the end of Key Stage 2 in 2011 were a disappointment for the school, particularly in mathematics. Unavoidable disruptions to staffing had a significant impact. With the return of the headteacher there is now a sharp focus on developing further the skills of the middle and senior leaders, something the school recognises is needed in order for them to play an even greater part in leading whole-school improvement. Inspection evidence shows clearly that the school is on course to raise attainment back to above the national average. This, along with the school's accurate evaluation of its performance and its strengths in leadership, management and governance, indicates a good capacity to sustain improvement. There are opportunities across some subjects to support and develop pupils' numeracy skills but this is yet to be fully implemented and embedded. Teaching is predominantly good. Most lessons are well paced and teachers' knowledgeable and clear explanations extend pupils' understanding well. In the best lessons pupils are provided with a range of opportunities and resources to extend their learning. Higher-attaining pupils enjoy the opportunity to work independently and to find out things for themselves. The use

of peer, group and self-assessment in lessons is good and helps pupils to understand their targets and what they need to do to improve their work. Outstandingly successful partnerships have been forged with other schools and the University of Cumbria and these too play a significant role in improving the quality of teaching.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise attainment so that it is consistently above average, especially in mathematics, by:
 - continuing to improve the quality of teaching so that it is consistently good or better
 - providing pupils with more opportunities across the curriculum to develop their numeracy skills
 - providing more opportunities for staff to share exemplary practice and hence increase the proportion of outstanding lessons.
- Develop further the skills of senior and middle managers to drive whole-school improvement.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

From an early age pupils work hard, concentrate well and enjoy learning. In lessons pupils were seen to be making good progress. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make the same progress as their peers and some few even better. They receive constructive specialist support from their teachers, teaching assistants and volunteers, which gives them the confidence and skills to succeed. Scrutiny of pupils' books and tracking of pupils' progress indicate that, following the disappointing Year 6 results in 2011, pupils are on track at least to meet, and many to exceed, national expectations.

Pupils enjoy coming to school, where they say they feel highly valued, respected and extremely safe. This is reflected in the above-average attendance of the vast majority of pupils. Older pupils willingly take on responsibilities, such as by becoming door and corridor monitors in between lessons, and are excellent role models for the younger children. They have highly developed social skills and work well both independently and as part of a team. Spiritual development and being mindful of those less fortunate is a strong feature of the school. These qualities, combined with pupils' good ICT, literacy and numeracy skills mean they are well equipped for their future lives. Pupils are confident they can turn to any adult if they have a concern and that school has effective procedures to eliminate inappropriate behaviour through the traffic light system. The weekly celebration assembly is highly motivating for pupils and this is reflected in exceptional behaviour in lessons and around school. The Healthy School status reflects the fact that pupils enjoy taking part in sports and speak knowledgeably about how to eat healthy food.

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	2
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	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	2
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1

How effective is the provision?

The school's monitoring of lessons and those seen during the inspection show that teaching good. In the most effective lessons work proceeds at a brisk pace and is well matched to pupils' needs. Teachers plan their lessons thoroughly and ensure that all groups of pupils make at least good and sometimes better progress. They make good use of varied resources, including ICT to engage pupils' interests so they enjoy learning. 'Talk partners' and peer, self and group assessments are a regular feature in lessons. They are used to reinforce learning and help the pupils to understand their targets and how to improve. In a Year 3 mathematics lesson there was a range of tasks designed to meet pupils' different needs and abilities. Higher-attaining pupils were given the opportunity to continue working independently to extend their learning when the rest of the class came together to assess their learning. Similarly, in a Year 6 mathematics lesson, the teacher reinforced the pupils' learning from the previous day before giving individuals independent challenges outdoors to put their problem-solving abilities into a real context. In a few lessons learning was not moved on at a brisk enough pace and the introduction with all the class together was too long. Pupils' work is marked regularly and they are given clear pointers for improvement. Assessment data are used to identify where pupils have gaps in their learning and to give them the extra help they need to improve.

The curriculum is reviewed regularly and there is a firm focus on restoring the school's record of high levels of attainment, particularly in mathematics. Opportunities to develop numeracy skills across the curriculum are growing but their range is yet to be fully extended and embedded, for example in science. The 'Change School' and 'Creative Partnerships' work have provided pupils with the opportunities to work with musicians, dancers and artists to enhance their understanding of other cultures and beliefs. Projects such as 'Green Fingers and Fab Food', which begin in the Early Years Foundation Stage, and work in the garden area reflect the Eco-School Status and are much enjoyed by pupils. Extra-curricular activities contribute well to personal development and include sports and cooking clubs.

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

Good care, guidance and support make a strong contribution to pupils' progress and to all aspects of their personal development. The school works closely with outside agencies to ensure that all groups of pupils, particularly those with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those who may be vulnerable, get the expert help they need. Good links with other schools ensure that pupils move smoothly between the different stages of their education. The breakfast club offers a suitable range of activities and provision. Behaviour is outstanding and staff know the children well.

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 leadership and management of the headteacher has been instrumental in bringing about improvements to this school so her unavoidable and longer than expected absence during the last academic year contributed to disappointing Year 6 results in 2011. The school is firmly on track to return to securing and sustaining above-average levels of attainment and this demonstrates strong ambition to drive improvement. It recognises the need to develop further the effectiveness of middle and senior leaders so that they can play an even stronger part in precisely monitoring, assessing and planning for whole-school improvement and to further share best practice in teaching in order that more becomes outstanding. The governing body contributes well to the school's success. Its effectiveness is good, providing a balance of support and challenge and ensuring statutory responsibilities are met. Safeguarding procedures are good and staff and governors are well trained in child protection.

There is a raft of outstanding partnerships that have a significant impact on pupils' well-being and good achievement. All pupils are given good equal opportunities to succeed and are full involved in the life of the school. Partnerships are used expertly to provide a range of experiences that the school alone cannot provide. The link with the University of Cumbria, for example, delivers an annual 'Science Week' which brings new ways of learning into the school. Leaders promote community cohesion well and particularly so within the school and the local community. Trips provide experiences to visit Hindu temples, Jewish synagogues and Buddhist temples.

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	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
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	2

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children's skills and knowledge when they enter Reception are broadly in line with those expected for their age. Parents and carers appreciate the good induction arrangements that prepare their children well for joining the school and helping them to settle quickly and happily. Outstanding provision and the effective balance of teacher-led tasks and children choosing for themselves enable children to make good progress. The recent improvements to the outdoor area have been well planned to encourage children to explore and investigate either independently or in small groups, with an especially strong and effective focus on the use of the natural environment. However, these have not yet had time to have full impact on improving children's progress further. By the time they leave the Early Years Foundation Stage children show a good level of independence, curiosity, imagination and concentration. The Early Years Foundation Stage Manager works closely with the Year 1 teacher to ensure a smooth transition and prioritise areas for learning. The vast majority of children have a good understanding of how to keep safe. They create their own keeping safe charter during the whole-school keeping safe week. Children understand how to stay healthy by, for example, growing their own vegetables, herbs and fruits.

Good procedures are in place to ensure the children's care, safety and welfare. Children show respect towards each other and the adults around them and willingly help to tidy up after activities. For example, one child confidently put shoes in order when they were left in an untidy pile after children dashed off enthusiastically to get started on activities. Strong relationships ensure that children share resources, work well cooperatively and behave sensibly. Staff are skilled at capitalising on children's learning by making effective interventions. For example, after making 'dark creatures' using playdough, following enthralling storytelling, the teacher and teaching assistant encouraged counting of the eyes before taking a photograph of their creatures. Progress is carefully recorded so that work can be tailored to individual needs.

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	1
The effectiveness of leadership and management in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2

Views of parents and carers

A very large majority of parents and carers are happy with their child's experience of school. They commented on how well the school 'promotes good manners, kindness and good behaviour' and their appreciation was shown for the 'hardworking, supportive and friendly staff'. One parent reported on the 'exceptional dedication and enthusiasm of the headteacher and her team.'

Some parents commented on a need for better communication between school and home, particularly in respect to understanding how well their child is progressing. Inspectors are satisfied with the quality and regularity of reports that are sent home. There are also information evenings that are used to report on progress to parents and carers. There is also evidence of invitations for parents and carers to come into school, should they have any concerns, through the weekly newsletter. There were some concerns recorded relating to the attainment by Year 6 pupils in 2011, particularly in mathematics. The reasons for this are outlined in the body of the report. Now that staffing has stabilised pupils are making much better progress and attainment is set to return to above-average levels.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Dean Gibson Catholic 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 74 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 157 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	49	66	20	27	1	1	2	3
The school keeps my child safe	47	64	25	34	2	3	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	30	41	30	41	10	14	2	3
My child is making enough progress at this school	33	45	34	46	6	8	1	1
The teaching is good at this school	40	54	25	34	4	5	1	1
The school helps me to support my child's learning	35	47	29	39	6	8	2	3
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	34	46	36	49	4	5	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)	37	50	25	34	2	3	1	1
The school meets my child's particular needs	36	49	28	38	7	9	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	35	47	30	41	6	8	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	28	38	38	51	4	5	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	45	61	20	27	6	8	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	44	59	21	28	7	9	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

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	43	47	10	0
Primary schools	6	46	42	6
Secondary schools	14	36	41	9
Sixth forms	15	42	41	3
Special schools	30	48	19	3
Pupil referral units	14	50	31	5
All schools	10	44	39	6

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 is for the period 1 September 2010 to 08 April 2011 and are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Sixth form figures reflect the judgements made for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

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:	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. ■ 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.



17 November 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Dean Gibson Catholic Primary School, Kendal, LA9 5HB

Thank you for the warm welcome we received when we came to inspect your school recently. A particular 'thank you' goes to those of you who took time to talk to us about all the things that you do in lessons, the work of the school council and your trips and visits to places of interest. Please thank your parents and carers for filling in our questionnaires.

Yours is a good school. You behave exceptionally well and have an excellent understanding of how to stay safe. The staff do all they can to support and encourage you. The care you receive is good and is made even better by teachers working with a wide range of partners beyond the school. The teaching you receive is good and improving. You make good progress and are becoming responsible and thoughtful young people, and you have a good understanding of how to adopt a healthy lifestyle. You show a great deal of respect towards each other and to the adults around you. The children in the Early Years Foundation Stage settle quickly into a welcoming and caring environment. They have good opportunities to learn and play both indoors and outside. The work done by staff in this area of the school is also good.

We have asked that the school continues to improve the quality of teaching in lessons and provide more opportunities to develop your numeracy skills in all subjects. This will help you to raise your attainment further, especially in mathematics, and help you reach your full potential.

All of you are a credit to your school and can help it improve further by attending regularly and continuing to try your very best.

Yours sincerely

Naomi Taylor
Lead Inspector

