

Victoria Junior School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	112204
Local Authority	Cumbria
Inspection number	357063
Inspection dates	13–14 October 2010
Reporting inspector	David Law

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	7–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	184
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Glyn Davies
Headteacher	Ms Caroline Vernon
Date of previous school inspection	17 April 2008
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. Inspectors observed teaching and learning in 17 lessons and nine teachers were seen teaching. They held meetings with groups of pupils, governors, staff and a representative from the local authority. They observed the school's work and looked at the improvement plan, school policies, safeguarding documents and evidence from the school's self-evaluation. Inspectors took account of teachers' curriculum planning and their assessments of pupils' progress. They reviewed samples of pupils' work and analysed questionnaires from 54 parents and carers, 13 staff and 113 pupils.

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

- The achievement of the more-able pupils to see if work is sufficiently challenging for them.
- The knowledge, skills and understanding pupils show in their writing and the levels they are reaching.
- The ability of school leaders and managers to evaluate the impact of strategies to improve pupils' achievement in writing.

Information about the school

This is a smaller than average sized school. The percentage of pupils known to be eligible for a free school meal is below average. The percentage of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, including those with a statement of special educational needs, is above average. There are few pupils from minority ethnic groups or who speak English as an additional language. The school has achieved Healthy Schools Status, Active Mark Gold and two Eco-Schools awards. In addition, the school has gained the International Schools Award.

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

Victoria Junior is a good school and a happy place where pupils are keen to participate and achieve well. Several outstanding features include a vibrant and exciting curriculum which promotes enthusiasm for learning. Outstanding care, guidance and support enable all pupils to make excellent progress in their personal development. Pupils thoroughly enjoy school, are immensely proud of their achievements, and their behaviour is outstanding. They are eager to take on responsibility and their contribution to the school and the wider community is outstanding. Pupils' excellent ability to work as a team was seen in the enthusiasm and skill of the school band at the harvest assembly. Partnerships to support learning and well-being are outstanding. For example, the school has many strong links with local business.

Achievement is good. All pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities and the more-able pupils, make good progress in their learning. By the end of Year 6 attainment is above average. Pupils are confident writers and many reach levels above those expected for their age. In mathematics, pupils solve problems with persistence. Pupils read well and enjoy using computers. Pupils' good ability to use and apply literacy, numeracy and computer skills, and their above average attendance, prepare them well for their future economic well-being. Consistently good teaching underpins the good achievement. Teachers assess pupils accurately and plan relevant and exciting things for them to learn. Pupils' progress is tracked carefully and prompt action is taken to overcome barriers to learning. Support for pupils with emotional or behavioural difficulties is excellent. Pupils are entirely confident that adults will help them if they have a problem. They feel safe in school and procedures for keeping them safe are good. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good but many are not secure in their knowledge and understanding of cultures different from their own.

The school is well led and managed with a shared ambition to improve. The headteacher provides a strong lead and clear vision. Other leaders and managers are effective and committed. Staff morale is high and strong teamwork is evident. A governing body provides good challenge and support. The school has a good capacity to improve. It knows itself well and priorities for improvement are well chosen. Self-evaluation, to which everyone is committed, is rigorous and thorough. There is a firm grasp of what needs to improve and it is tackled robustly and, for example, the school successfully improved pupils' writing. The promotion of community cohesion is good and pupils from all backgrounds get on well with each other. Excellent relations with parents and carers underpin their strong support.

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What does the school need to do to improve further?

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

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Pupils concentrate well and work together with high levels of cooperation. They are enthusiastic learners who tackle things with persistence and enjoy solving problems. They listen carefully, can explain what they have to learn and have a good understanding of what will make them successful. These very positive attitudes during lessons enable pupils to make brisk gains in knowledge, skills and understanding. Most enter the school with attainment broadly in line with that expected at this age. All groups of pupils make good progress and by the end of Year 6 reach above average standards in English, mathematics and science. Those with special educational needs and/or disabilities also make good progress because they receive well-targeted support. Pupils are adept at applying their literacy skills. For example, they write sensitively about the feelings of Henry VIII's wives and with gusto about how to embalm an Egyptian mummy. They enjoy solving challenges in mathematics and doing practical activities in science.

Pupils' outstanding contribution to the school and wider community is exemplified by the mature and confident way school council members, prefects and play leaders fulfil their duties. Pupils have a strong voice in decisions that affect them. For example, they used their research skills to gain the views of fellow pupils about transfer to secondary school and their findings have been acted upon. Pupils have an excellent understanding about how to keep healthy and eagerly participate in the wide-range of sport open to them. Pupils are very respectful of each other, have a keen sense of right and wrong and enjoy cultural activities in art and music. However, their knowledge and understanding of the diversity of world cultures is less secure.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

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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	2
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 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	2

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

How effective is the provision?

Teaching is good. Some lessons are outstanding with brisk pace, high levels of challenge and excellent organisation that results in rapid progress for pupils. All teaching is characterised by good relations with pupils and plans for learning that match the needs of groups and individuals. Teachers skilfully provide learning that is relevant and practical, making use, for example, of visits to places of interest. Teacher use technology well to capture pupils' interest such as interactive whiteboards which make learning lively and engaging. Teachers have good subject knowledge, for example, in mathematics, English, art and music. Assessment is used well and all teachers adjust learning effectively as they assess what pupils can do. Teachers track pupils' progress carefully and information used well to plan the next steps.

The outstanding and innovative curriculum is based on a wide-range of well planned and relevant activities that make learning exciting. An excellent feature is the way it promotes pupils' personal development. It enables them to apply their literacy and numeracy skills and challenges their thinking. It develops self-esteem, for example, through participation in creative arts. The school has extensive links with the local business community which have been used to develop pupils' teamwork skills and to raise aspiration. Outstanding care, guidance and support are exemplified in the provision for the most vulnerable pupils. For example, pupils with emotional difficulties are given excellent support to enable them to participate in learning and develop personally. Consequently, they are able to play a full

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part in school life. Links with outside agencies are extensive and deeply embedded. Pupils transfer to secondary school with confidence and security because procedures to help them are excellent. There are efficient systems to ensure good attendance and pupils are eager to arrive at school on time.

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	1
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

Leaders and managers work together with high levels of commitment to pupils' learning and well-being. The headteacher is relentless in the pursuit of higher standards and all leaders and managers share her vision for the school. There are clear systems for managing staff performance and any training required is well focused. All leaders and managers contribute well to self-evaluation; improvement planning is systematic and purposeful. Where something needs to improve, it is tackled tenaciously. For example, school leaders and managers wanted more pupils to achieve in writing at higher levels by the time they leave the school. Revision of the English curriculum and investment in professional development secured this objective. Attainment in this area was above average this year. The governing body is supportive, strategic and well informed. It has recently audited its skills so it can develop the way it challenges the school to improve. Leaders and managers and the governing body share an ambition for all pupils to achieve well.

Outstanding partnerships, including links with schools, local business and community organisations make an excellent contribution to pupils' personal development. They provide significant experiences which the school alone could not achieve and promote a keen enthusiasm for learning. For example, the Furness Learning Innovation Programme enables access to work with local artists and musicians that has particularly benefitted the more-able pupils. The school effectively promotes community cohesion because it knows its pupils and context well. There are particularly strong links with communities locally but also with Africa. All pupils have equal opportunity to learn and there is no discrimination. Procedures for safeguarding are good because policies are clear and staff knowledge of how to act is secure. The budget is well managed and the school provides good value for money. Parents and carers enjoy excellent links with the school and are supportive of its aims. The following comment is typical of their views, 'The school's calm, caring ethos has helped our children to achieve and blossom with self-esteem and confidence.'

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These are the grades for 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	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

Views of parents and carers

The parents and carers returning the questionnaires stated they are very happy with their child's experience. They say teaching is good, the school is led and managed effectively and children are well prepared for the future. They all think their children are making enough progress. Inspectors endorse these views.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Victoria Junior 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 54 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 184 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	38	70	14	26	2	4	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	48	89	6	11	0	0	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	38	70	16	30	0	0	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	36	67	18	33	0	0	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	38	70	16	30	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	39	72	15	28	0	0	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	39	72	15	28	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)	36	67	16	30	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	34	63	19	35	0	0	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	34	63	19	35	1	2	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	35	65	17	31	2	4	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	41	76	12	22	1	2	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	42	78	12	22	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

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	58	36	4	2
Primary schools	8	43	40	9
Secondary schools	10	35	42	13
Sixth forms	13	39	45	3
Special schools	33	42	20	4
Pupil referral units	18	40	29	12
All schools	11	42	38	9

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 are for the period 1 September 2009 to 31 March 2010 and are the most recently published data available (see www.ofsted.gov.uk). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn and spring terms 2009/10 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. 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.



15 October 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Victoria Junior School, Barrow-in-Furness, LA14 5NE

The other inspectors and I enjoyed our visit to your school. Thank you for making us welcome. You contributed well to the inspection by being eager to talk to us. We found that your school is providing you with a good education. We saw that you are very proud of your school and enjoy being there. These are some of the things we think you do well:

- Your behaviour is excellent and you work very hard in your lessons.
- You get on very well together and are keen to take responsibility for helping around the school, such as by being on the school council.
- The care that adults provide is outstanding and this helps you to feel confident and good about yourself.
- The curriculum you experience is outstanding with many exciting things to do.
- The partnerships you have, for example, with other schools and local business, are outstanding and help you to learn skills such as team work.
- You make good progress in your learning and we were particularly impressed by your writing and by your talented school band.

We have one recommendation to help you improve further:

- We would like you to learn even more about other cultures and traditions both in Britain and around the world – for example, by finding out about other people's religion, foods, dress and ceremonies.

I hope you will work hard to bring about these improvements. Best wishes for the future.

Yours sincerely

Mr David Law
Lead inspector

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