

Victoria Junior School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	112145
Local authority	Cumbria
Inspection number	378434
Inspection dates	26–27 March 2012
Lead inspector	Adrian Francis

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	265
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Carol Petitt
Headteacher	Pauline Robertson
Date of previous school inspection	25 November 2008
School address	Victoria Road Workington CA14 2RE
Telephone number	01900 325242
Fax number	01900 325243
Email address	head@victoriajunior.cumbria.sch.uk



You can use Parent View to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school. Ofsted will use the information parents and carers provide when deciding which schools to inspect and when.

You can also use Parent View to find out what other parents and carers think about schools in England. You can visit www.parentview.ofsted.gov.uk, or look for the link on the main Ofsted website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, work-based learning and skills training, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk

You may copy all or parts of this document for non-commercial purposes, as long as you give details of the source and date of publication and do not alter the information in any way.

To receive regular email alerts about new publications, including survey reports and school inspection reports, please visit our website and go to 'Subscribe'.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 4234
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
www.ofsted.gov.uk



Introduction

Inspection team

Adrian Francis
Sharon Lambert
Julie McGrane

Additional inspector
Additional inspector
Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. Inspectors visited 17 lessons taught by 12 teachers and talked with groups of pupils, members of the governing body and staff. Inspectors took account of the responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) in planning the inspection, and to the questionnaires returned by 84 parents and carers, 242 pupils and 24 staff during the inspection. The inspectors observed the school's work and looked at pupils' books, teachers' planning, school self-evaluation, leaders' monitoring of teaching and a range of data.

Information about the school

This vast majority of the pupils who attend this slightly larger than average-sized primary school come from White British backgrounds. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is slightly above average. The proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs is well above average. The school meets the current floor standard.

At the time of the inspection, the executive headteacher (who is also headteacher of the neighbouring infant school) had been in post for almost a year. The school has gained Healthy School status, the Activemark and an international language 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	3
Achievement of pupils	3
Quality of teaching	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils	3
Leadership and management	3

Key Findings

- Victoria Junior is a satisfactory school. The achievement of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs is good overall and attendance is above average. Overall effectiveness is not considered to be good because teaching is not consistently effective at ensuring all pupils make good progress.
- Pupils' achievement is satisfactory. Although attainment has been low, accelerated progress through Years 3 to 6 is evident from observed lessons, the school's records and work in pupils' books. This shows a good improvement in pupils' attainment throughout the school, which is now closer to average.
- Teaching is satisfactory overall but, where it is good, high expectations ensure pupils learn quickly. Improving the teaching of basic literacy skills has been a high priority for the school, but teachers do not always structure lessons sufficiently well so that pupils are clear about what they are learning.
- Behaviour and safety are satisfactory. Pupils say they feel safe in school. The large majority of pupils behave well most of the time but sometimes become restless when lessons do not sufficiently engage them. Attendance is above average and punctuality is good.
- Senior leaders, led effectively by the executive headteacher, manage teachers' and pupils' performance satisfactorily, but middle leaders are currently insufficiently involved in this aspect. Weaker teaching has been identified and challenged appropriately. There are emerging strengths in the curriculum, particularly in the way in which information and communication technology promotes learning and achievement in different subjects. The governing body is improving in its effectiveness but does not yet offer sufficient challenge to senior leaders regarding the school's performance.

Schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Continue to raise pupils' attainment and accelerate their progress in English and mathematics by:
 - clarifying the purpose of the learning in each lesson and by providing clear steps to success for all ability groups
 - improving the language for learning and related vocabulary in lessons so that pupils are able to discuss and understand their learning more fully
 - improving the consistency with which marking of work is undertaken so that the pupils have a clear understanding of the next steps they have to take in order to improve.
 - shortening the introductions to lessons to ensure that pupils remain fully engaged in their learning and in listening.

- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management by:
 - strengthening and developing the middle leaders' capacity to monitor and evaluate the impact of teaching on learning
 - raising the level of challenge provided by the governing body and ensuring it takes on more of a strategic role.

Main Report

Achievement of pupils

Historically, pupils' attainment has been low and their progress slower than expected. Lesson observations, the school's current tracking data and the analysis of pupils' work indicate considerable improvement, with attainment now closer to age-related expectations. More pupils are now reaching the higher levels of attainment. Higher expectations, new progress targets and a more rigorous focus on learning are supporting much improved rates of progress across the school. Pupils generally enjoy reading; attainment in reading is improving across the school and is broadly average in Year 6. This represents satisfactory achievement overall. Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs are making good progress and are narrowing the gap between their performance and that of all pupils nationally. This is also true for other groups of pupils currently in school, including the more-able pupils, particularly in English. Progress in lessons overall is no better than satisfactory, particularly when the learning intention is not made clear and pupils are not provided with appropriate support for their learning.

In a writing lesson in Year 4, for example, pupils of all abilities enjoyed the lesson and the teachers' use of resources, but pupils were unable to explain their learning or how they would know whether they had been successful by the end of the lesson. The overwhelming majority of parents and carers feel their children are making good progress. As a parent of a child in Year 5 explained, 'I have seen significant changes to the school over the past 12 months. My child is happy and settled and achieving good grades.' Whilst agreeing that pupils are now making much better progress, inspectors judge that their achievement is satisfactory overall.

Quality of teaching

Although teaching in recent years has not been effective enough, resulting in low attainment, the quality of teaching has improved and is now satisfactory with some strong features. As a result pupils are making satisfactory progress across the school. Most teachers demonstrate good subject knowledge. They ensure classroom routines are made clear and regularly reinforced so that learning takes place in a well-structured environment. Most teachers provide opportunities for pupils to contribute to lessons, although in a small number of lessons pupils spent too much time listening to the teacher and not actively engaging in practical learning tasks, discussions or opportunities to use their initiative. A lack of focus on the language pupils need for learning and on improving pupils' vocabulary is hampering their learning. Learning intentions are not always made clear at the beginning of each lesson and, as a result, pupils are not always clear as to what it is that they will be learning or how they will know whether they have been successful. Teachers now have a good understanding of the progress their pupils are making due to regular analysis of data about pupils' performance.

In the best lessons, teachers generate high levels of enthusiasm for learning among pupils. This contributes well to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. In a Year 5 lesson, pupils responded well to careful questioning about the sizes of angles and were able to refer to previous work they had completed, showing very positive attitudes to their learning. However, in some lessons, planning does not take full account of pupils' previous learning in order to ensure that all ability groups are appropriately challenged. A strong emphasis is placed on promoting positive behaviour and most teachers are skilled in doing this by giving consistent messages, using incidental praise and highlighting good responses from pupils. Sometimes, however, pupils become restless during over-long lesson introductions. Clearly-targeted support for disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs results in good progress. The very large majority of parents and carers who responded to the questionnaire feel that their children are taught well. Inspectors found that, although improved teaching is helping pupils to make satisfactory progress, this is not yet sufficiently embedded to ensure that they make consistently good progress.

Teaching assistants often provide well-focused support, especially for lower ability pupils, disabled pupils and those with special educational needs, and when pupils are working independently or in small groups. This results in generally good rates of progress for these pupils. The planned curriculum has a mostly satisfactory, and sometimes good, impact on teaching.

Marking varies in quality. Some of the marking is of a high standard, clearly identifying for pupils the next steps in their learning. This is not a consistent feature, however. There is a lack of clarity in many teachers' comments as to how pupils could improve their work and when constructive comments are made there is often little evidence that pupils have acted upon this guidance.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Pupils typically behave satisfactorily in lessons and around school. The large majority of parents and carers who responded to the questionnaire feel that behaviour is good in

the school and the overwhelming majority feel that the school keeps their children safe. A small minority of comments received relate to concerns over ongoing poor behaviour at breaktimes. Inspectors found that this has been an issue but has been dealt with satisfactorily. In the best lessons, when pupils are fully engaged, their behaviour contributes well to good learning. However, where there are weaknesses in teaching, pupils find it harder to concentrate and can become restless, limiting the progress they make. Pupils say that behaviour is generally positive, that they know that there are adults they can talk to if they have any concerns and that they feel safe both in the playground and in the classroom. They are aware of the different types of bullying. School documents and discussions with pupils confirm that where bullying occurs it is dealt with firmly and in line with the school's policy.

Pupils' attendance is above the national average. School leaders manage this aspect of the school very well, ensuring that poor punctuality and absence is dealt with effectively in a number of ways, including through improved relationships with parents and carers.

Leadership and management

Leaders have a clear school vision based on raising attainment. Improvements to self-evaluation ensure that most leaders know the strengths and areas for development in the school. Areas for improvement are identified in the school improvement plan and actions taken are evaluated for their impact. Staff believe that their training needs are met; professional development for teachers links clearly with the school's priorities for improvement. Actions to bring about improvements have been effective. Middle leaders have a clear ambition and determination to succeed. However, their impact on improving teaching and learning across the school is not yet evident.

The governing body has stabilised following a period of change, although its strategic view of whole-school needs and priorities is still developing, along with its ability to provide sufficient challenge to the leadership team. Policies are regularly reviewed and improving links with parents and carers are beginning to have a positive impact on pupils' achievement. Parental workshops in mathematics and other specific areas have helped them to support their children's learning more effectively. The school fully meets safeguarding requirements.

The areas for improvement set at the time of the last inspection have been tackled satisfactorily. The school's pupils' tracking system is used effectively to inform teachers and school leaders of the progress being made by individuals and groups of pupils. More still needs to be done to improve pupils' understanding of how well they are doing and how they could improve their work. Equal opportunities are promoted well, evidenced by the fact that gaps in attainment among different groups of pupils are narrowing. Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs have equal access to the curriculum and value their membership of extra-curricular clubs and other activities, both of which contribute to their good overall achievement. This was exemplified by the Year 4 visit to Buttermere about which these pupils were very excited. Pupils of all abilities explained the range of activities they were going to be involved in and the learning they were hoping to cover. The satisfactorily broad and balanced curriculum soundly supports the promotion of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

The school can point to some clear successes over recent terms, including establishing a positive climate for learning, which is much appreciated by parents and carers. The strong focus on consolidating and improving teaching has led to improved confidence across the staff team. Several parents and carers remarked strongly on this. As one wrote, 'My son has settled very well into the school, he is animated by what he is learning and I feel his teaching is excellent.' These successes demonstrate that Victoria Junior has a satisfactory capacity to improve further.

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	46	46	8	0
Primary schools	8	47	40	5
Secondary schools	14	38	40	8
Special schools	28	48	20	4
Pupil referral units	15	50	29	5
All schools	11	46	38	6

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2010 to 31 August 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data 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.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Behaviour	how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and 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 governors and 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.
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.
Safety	how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.

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.



28 March 2012

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Victoria Junior School, Workington, CA14 2RE

Thank you for making us so welcome when we inspected your school, and for telling us your views about the school. We enjoyed looking in your books, reading your questionnaires and joining you in your lessons. This helped us to get to know your school. It provides you with a satisfactory education and these are some of the things we liked the most.

- Your good attendance shows that you enjoy coming to school and most of you are eager to learn.
- You have a clear understanding of what bullying is and say you are confident to speak to an adult if you have a problem.
- School leaders and the governing body are helping the school to improve, led very well by your executive headteacher.
- Your achievement has improved over the past year and those of you who need extra help with your learning make good progress.

We have asked the school to do the following things to make it even better:

- ensure teachers make it very clear to you what it is that you are learning in lessons and how you will know when you have been successful
- encourage you to talk more in lessons about your learning and to improve the vocabulary you use, so you can explain what you have learned more effectively; this will also help your writing
- for all teachers to mark your work really well, give you clear guidance on how you could improve it, and give you time to read their comments and take good notice of them
- improve the ways in which teachers in charge of subjects and the governing body help the school to improve even more.

You can all play your part by helping your school become even better by always working hard and concentrating well in all lessons.

Yours sincerely

Adrian Francis
Lead inspector

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaining about inspections', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk. If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone **0300 123 4234**, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.