

St James' CofE Junior School

Wellington Row, Whitehaven, Cumbria, CA28 7HG

Inspection dates 14–15 January 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	Requires improvement	3
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Leadership and management		Requires improvement	3

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement. It is not good because

- The standard of pupils' writing is similar to the national average. Given their starting points, their writing should be better. They do not always have enough time in lessons to improve their work.
- Similarly, standards in reading are in line with the national average, but across each year group pupils do not make consistently good progress. The guided reading sessions are not always planned well enough.
- Pupils' attainment in spelling, punctuation and grammar is lower than expected. Across all subjects, there are missed opportunities for pupils to improve these skills.
- The quality of teaching is too variable. In recent years, it has not been good enough to enable pupils to achieve consistently well across each year group and in all subjects.
- Teachers do not always expect enough of pupils as they move from Key Stage 1 to Key Stage 2. Occasionally, there are missed opportunities to make the activities relevant to real-life situations. When this is the case, pupils become distracted from what they should be doing and behaviour deteriorates.
- Records of incidents regarding behaviour and safety are not analysed carefully enough to make further improvements in pupils' security.
- Subject leaders do not have sufficient impact on improving teaching and achievement in their subjects across the school.
- Senior leaders and governors have an overly positive view of the quality of teaching and levels of progress made by pupils over time.

The school has the following strengths

- Since appointment, the headteacher is driving change and improvement. As a result, the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement are beginning to improve rapidly.
- There have been improvements in the standards and achievement in mathematics. Current work shows that this is continuing.
- Pupils feel safe in school. Older pupils enjoy taking on responsibilities and acting as good role models to the younger pupils.
- The school promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well.
- A wide range of additional activities brings variety and enjoyment to pupils' learning.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching in 10 lessons, one of which was observed jointly with the headteacher. In addition, the inspectors made a number of short visits to lessons and listened to pupils read.
- Discussions were held with school staff; groups of pupils; senior staff and leaders with responsibility for a specific subject; governors; parents and a representative from the local authority.
- The inspector observed the school's work and looked at a wide range of documentation including safeguarding documents, the school's procedures for gaining an accurate view of its own performance, its development plans, records of pupils' standards and progress, documents relating to attendance and behaviour, and pupils' work in their books.
- There were 28 parental responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) which the inspectors took into account alongside the responses to the school's own parental survey. Seventeen responses to the inspection questionnaire for staff were taken into account.

Inspection team

Naomi Taylor, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Sheila Mawer

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- St James' is smaller than most primary schools.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium is lower than that found nationally. This is funding based on the number of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals, any pupils who are looked after by the local authority, and any children with a parent in the armed forces.
- The proportion of pupils supported at school action is below average. The proportion supported by school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is above average.
- Most pupils are White British. Very few are from minority ethnic backgrounds.
- Most pupils have previously attended St James' CofE Infant School nearby.
- Since the previous inspection, a new headteacher and a new deputy headteacher have been appointed. New teachers were appointed in September 2013.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in English and mathematics.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching so that all is good or better by ensuring that:
 - teachers have consistently high expectations of what pupils can achieve as they move from Key Stage 1 to Key Stage 2
 - learning is made relevant to pupils so that they have consistently good attitudes to learning
 - teachers allow time in lessons for pupils to improve and edit their work, especially their writing.
- Raise pupils' achievement in reading and writing by:
 - improving the planning, teaching and evaluation of progress in guided reading sessions
 - ensuring that across all subjects, teachers use every opportunity for pupils to improve their spelling, punctuation and grammar both in their speaking and their written work.
- Improve leadership and management, including governance, by:
 - enabling the teachers who lead subjects to improve the quality of teaching in their subjects
 - senior leaders analysing records of incidents in order to plan future actions to improve behaviour and safety
 - ensuring members of the governing body and senior leaders improve the accuracy of their evaluation of how well their school is doing compared to others nationally.

An external review of governance should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and governance may be improved.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Results of the 2011 and 2012 national tests for Year 6 pupils and the school's pupil assessment data indicate that progress made by pupils was inconsistent across year groups and subjects, particularly in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Pupils' achievement, however, has improved. In 2013, most pupils in Year 6 made the progress expected of them although too few did better than that. Assessments of current pupils in Years 4, 5 and 6 show that progress is accelerating rapidly, although not so well in Year 3. Standards in reading and writing are now similar to national expectations for their age, but they could be much better given the pupils' starting points in Year 3.
- Pupils' abilities when they join the school are usually at least in line with, and for many, higher than national expectations. The school has introduced assessments in the autumn term of Year 3 which verify that a minority of the most able pupils are not as confident in their reading and writing as might be expected.
- Year 6 pupils leaving school in 2013 reached standards in spelling, punctuation and grammar that were below average. The school is addressing this and the current Year 6 pupils are in line to meet national expectations.
- Pupils are doing well in mathematics and there is improvement across all current year groups. Standards reached in mathematics are higher than the national average.
- Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs are well supported; they make similar progress to their peers and some do better.
- Pupils eligible for the pupil premium, including those known to be eligible for free school meals, now make similar progress to all pupils and some do better, as a result of additional support carefully targeted by senior leaders. Their attainment in mathematics, reading and writing is similar to this group of pupils nationally.
- The most able pupils are now making the progress expected but occasionally there are missed opportunities to really engage with them through relevant, real-life learning. The school displays real commitment to promote equality of opportunity for all pupils.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- The quality of teaching is not consistently good across all lessons, both over time and as seen during the inspection.
- Sometimes teachers do not expect enough of pupils, particularly when they join the school. Teaching at the beginning of Year 3 does not help pupils in the first few days and weeks to build on the skills and knowledge they have learnt at the end of Year 2.
- In some lessons, pupils are given activities to complete but there is no real understanding by the pupils as to how this will be relevant to them in real-life situations. For example, during a guided reading session, pupils discussed an extract which referred to extreme weather conditions. However, no reference was made to recent weather conditions in this country and overseas, which could have made the learning more relevant.
- When the teachers do not plan lessons well enough to fully engage pupils, they become distracted, behaviour deteriorates and not enough progress is made.
- In lessons where pupils made good progress, they were encouraged to find out things for themselves and develop their ideas. An example of this was seen in a Year 6 English lesson. In pairs, pupils analysed an extract from a book and shared their observations. The teacher skilfully introduced role play to encourage pupils to use language vividly so they could write well. All pupils were enjoying their learning and made good progress.
- The introduction of themed work has been effective in bringing science, history, geography and other subjects to life. The water theme is currently engaging pupils' imaginations but there are

missed opportunities to improve pupils' spelling, punctuation and grammar in what pupils say and write in these sessions.

- The use and quality of teaching assistants are good. The staff check around the class asking pupils questions to deepen pupils' thinking and understanding. They extend pupils' skills and help them to become more independent rather than dependent on them.
- Teachers check how well pupils are doing during lessons and ask good questions to make pupils think and explain their reasoning. Work is regularly marked but there is not always enough time in lessons for pupils to edit or correct their work, particularly their writing. This hampers pupils' progress.

The behaviour and safety of pupils

require improvement

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure requires improvement. Although incidents are recorded and acted upon, there is a lack of analysis by senior leaders to improve behaviour and safety further.
- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement. Whereas in most lessons, during breaks and when visiting other places pupils are well mannered and polite, there are times when this is not the case.
- Some parents raised concerns with the inspectors about how well behaviour was managed in some classes and this was reflected in the responses to Parent View.
- The inspectors observed at first hand that in some lessons pupils were fully involved from the start. They were focused, engrossed and helped each other to solve problems and, as a result, they behaved impeccably. In other lessons where teaching was not stimulating enough, pupils were off-task, fidgeting and distracted. This hampered their learning and progress.
- In most lessons, pupils generally worked well together, particularly if the task was enjoyable and interesting. They took turns, negotiated, compromised and learnt how to form a collective view.
- Pupils said that behaviour was generally good, but occasionally there was bullying such as name-calling. Pupils have a good understanding of different types of bullying and could talk about how to keep safe when using computers.
- The school has developed older pupils to be role models and play leaders and this has improved the behaviour of pupils at lunchtimes.
- Some pupils join the school other than at the usual times because they have experienced difficulties in other schools. The staff are successful in helping these pupils to settle in and improve their behaviour.
- The school considers pupils' social and emotional development to be of great importance. Staff work closely with parents and other agencies to make sure that pupils and their families get the support that they need.
- Pupils are encouraged to take part in sports to help them stay healthy and promote their well-being. The primary school sport funding is to be allocated towards working with external coaches. This is to improve the skills of staff so that they can teach a wider range of sporting activities to a higher standard. Pupils reluctant to participate in sport have become more engaged with the introduction of indoor bowling and a link with a local club.
- Pupils' attendance is broadly average and improving.

The leadership and management

require improvement

- Leadership and management, including governance, require improvement because the school has not been able to maintain good progress across year groups since the previous inspection, when the school was judged to be good.
- The headteacher has introduced thorough procedures to effect improvement. Although these have yet to have full impact in external tests, particularly in reading and writing, the school is now improving and demonstrates that it can improve further.

- The headteacher has developed a clear understanding of school priorities and actions to address these have been quickly put into place.
- The headteacher checks the quality of teaching, which directly links with training and support needs of staff as well as salary progression.
- The role of some subject leaders is not yet fully developed in checking on the progress of groups of pupils and taking action to accelerate achievement in their areas of responsibility.
- The local authority has been effective in recently starting programmes to develop the expertise of leaders and managers, including the governing body, at the request of the headteacher.
- Safeguarding arrangements meet statutory requirements, although one element of the school's work requires further improvement.
- The school promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well. Pupils take part in many after-school activities and the range of trips enriches their experiences.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Many governors are new to their roles but are highly committed to the school. They manage the budget well and have successfully appointed new staff. Governors agree on how the pupil-premium grant is used but they are not yet fully aware of the use of the additional sport funding. They are kept informed about the quality of teaching and link teachers' salary progression to pupils' progress. Governors review information about standards at the end of Year 6 but are less well informed regarding progress that pupils make from year to year, in different classes and across subjects throughout the school. As a result, they have not held school leaders sufficiently to account for the academic performance of the school. The governors and the senior leaders have been overly positive in evaluating the overall effectiveness of the school compared to others nationally. However, governors are keen to attend training designed to help them carry out their duties.

What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	112298
Local authority	Cumbria
Inspection number	433167

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	7–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	186
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Jeremy Gilmore
Headteacher	Moira Maughan
Date of previous school inspection	9 September 2010
Telephone number	01946 695311
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