

St James' C of E Infant School

High Street, Whitehaven, Cumbria, CA28 7PZ

Inspection dates

11–12 March 2014

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Children get off to a good start in the Early Years Foundation Stage. They make good progress throughout their time at school because they are well taught.
- Pupils enjoy and learn well from the activities which are planned for them. They are encouraged to use their imaginations and find out things for themselves.
- Attainment by the end of Year 2 is above average. Pupils' reading skills are particularly well developed by the time they leave school.
- For all classes the indoor spaces provide a stimulating learning environment and this extends to the outdoor areas. There are many opportunities to learn beyond school.
- Pupils' behaviour is good. They say they feel safe in school and they learn how to stay safe in other environments.
- Links between school and home are strong. The school is highly valued by pupils and their families because they are cared for by a team of staff who know each pupil well.
- The senior leadership team has an accurate view of the school's strengths and areas for development. They lead by example and staff share their vision for promoting personal development alongside academic achievement.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness is extremely well developed.
- Together the senior leadership team and the governing body are building on the strengths in teaching and achievement found at the previous inspection. This is an improving school.
- Governors have carried out a self-evaluation which has effectively developed their roles in supporting and challenging the school.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Pupils' attainment and achievement are not yet outstanding because some teaching does not help them to make fast enough progress.
- Occasionally, pupils find work too easy and activities are not adapted quickly enough.
- In Key Stage 1, pupils do not always have opportunities to correct or improve their work, particularly in mathematics.
- Teachers and teaching assistants do not yet have enough opportunities to share best practice across the school.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed teaching in seven lessons, two of which were joint observations with the headteacher. In addition, the inspector 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; members of the governing body; 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 58 parental responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) which the inspector took into account alongside the responses to the school's own parental survey. Twenty-four responses to the inspection questionnaire for staff were taken into account.

Inspection team

Naomi Taylor, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- St James' is an average-sized primary school.
- The proportion of pupils for whom the school receives the pupil premium is lower than that found nationally. The pupil premium is additional government funding for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals, children who are looked after by the local authority and the children of service families.
- The proportion of pupils supported through school action is well below that found nationally.
- The proportion supported by school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is average.
- The large majority of pupils are White British. Very few are from minority ethnic backgrounds or speak English as an additional language.
- The school has achieved the Activemark in Sport, Artsmark, Healthy School Status, Fairtrade School and School Achievement Awards.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise attainment and achievement further by:
 - making sure that tasks provide a good level of challenge and that, when pupils find them too easy, they are adapted quickly
 - ensuring teachers in Key Stage 1 regularly provide time in lessons for pupils to correct their work, particularly in mathematics
 - providing more opportunities for teachers and teaching assistants to share best practice across the school.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Most children start school with skills and knowledge that are below those typically expected for their age. Literacy and understanding of the world around them is usually particularly weak, although this does vary from year to year.
- In the Early Years Foundation Stage, children are encouraged to develop their core skills in language and mathematics. As a result, children leave Reception much closer overall to the skills expected for their age but these are still weaker in writing.
- Pupils build on the good start they have made and they continue to make good and, at times, better progress across Key Stage 1. They reach well-above average standards in reading and above average standards in writing and mathematics by the end of Year 2.
- Results of the screening check in phonics (letters and their sounds) in 2013 were below average. However, current Year 1 pupils are on track to be much closer to the expected standard this year. This is as a result of a newly introduced whole-school approach to teaching phonics. Pupils make very good use of their library and their reading records show that they regularly read at home. This contributes well to pupils achieving well-above the national standards by the time they leave school. Pupils were excited about the opportunity to dress up as their favourite characters at the end of the week to celebrate World Book Day (which had been postponed owing to their 'Fairtrade' day the previous week).
- The school's own checks on pupils' progress and work in pupils' books show that they achieve well in mathematics and have many opportunities to use and develop their mathematical skills in other subject areas, particularly in science and topic work.
- To address the dip in writing in the 2013 results, the school has provided a range of stimulating opportunities to teach writing which have brought about accelerated progress. Good progress is being made across the school in writing.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make good progress as a result of well targeted support from teachers, teaching assistants and, when necessary, external agencies.
- Results in 2013 for those pupils known to be eligible for free school meals show that they make good progress in reading, writing and mathematics, given their starting points. Pupil premium funding is used well to ensure individual pupils who are entitled to the funding receive the support they need. Although this group reached the standards expected for similar pupils nationally in reading and writing, standards in mathematics were lower. This group was approximately two terms behind their classmates in writing and a year behind in reading and mathematics. Current data show this gap is closing rapidly.
- The most able pupils make good progress because, depending on their abilities, there are times when they are taught with older pupils rather than in their own age group. However, there are occasions when some find work too easy.
- The few pupils from minority ethnic groups make good progress in reading, writing and mathematics. The very few who speak English as an additional language make rapid progress during their time at school. This demonstrates the school's successful commitment to promoting equality of opportunity.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching is good because teachers and teaching assistants encourage pupils from an early age to become inquisitive and develop a love for learning.
- The teaching of literacy and numeracy has been strengthened by recent training and this has helped staff to focus tightly on the skills needed by groups and individuals to make good progress. Classrooms and outdoor areas are organised well and activities and resources carefully

match pupils' interests and abilities.

- There is a consistent approach to making clear to pupils what they are going to learn and pupils know what is expected of them. As a result, they tackle tasks with confidence. Support from other adults is central to the school's strategy for ensuring the good achievement made by pupils.
- Interesting topics and activities are chosen so that all pupils become interested and involved in learning. The support pupils receive encourages them to become confident and proud of their work. For example, children in Reception were skilfully supported by a visitor to the school who was helping them to build their own willow den outdoors. They visibly grew in confidence as they saw their teamwork create a valuable addition to their outdoor play area.
- Opportunities for pupils to practise their writing skills have been extended since the previous inspection. The positive impact of small group interventions for those who were falling behind has led to rapid progress over a term. This was evident from the examples of written work in books in September compared to the recent work on their project on 'The *Titanic*'.
- The teaching of reading is very effective. Pupils who read to the inspector were able to use their phonics knowledge and skills to recognise letters and blend their sounds to work out unfamiliar words. They demonstrated a good understanding of what they had read by retelling the stories in their own words.
- Learning is made relevant and interesting. This was seen in a Key Stage 1 mathematics lesson when pupils were given a menu and asked to select something to eat and drink. They then had to work out the cost. Good progress was made with their mathematics skills.
- Occasionally, when pupils find work easy, the activities are not adapted quickly enough to provide more challenge for pupils.
- In the Early Years Foundation Stage, learning journeys clearly record children's progress. Parents are well informed of how they can support their children's learning at home through 'My Learning Leaflets' at the start of each new project.
- Marking of work is of a good quality and helps pupils to improve their understanding. However, in Key Stage 1, because pupils are not given enough time to correct or improve their work, particularly in mathematics, they do not always learn from their mistakes as well as they could.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Pupils are very happy in school, behave well and look after each other. Results of the school's own parental survey, those found on Parent View and comments made by parents during the inspection supports this. One parent told the inspector that the school, 'allows pupils to be children, while nurturing them to grow as individuals'.
- In lessons and around school pupils are courteous towards each other and the adults around them. Occasionally, when activities do not fully challenge pupils, they can become distracted and this slows their progress.
- Every week, a pupil from each class is selected to sit at the 'Captains Table' for lunch to reward them for their good behaviour.
- There are regular trips and visitors to the school which broaden pupils' horizons. The school website celebrates the school hosting Native American dancers from Oklahoma and East Asian teachers who worked with pupils. Displays in school of pupils celebrating Chinese New Year show their enjoyment in baking fortune cookies and writing messages to go inside them and also making a dragon to use in their dragon dance.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. For example, each year there is a 'Safety Week' when pupils learn about e-safety, road safety and 'Stranger Danger' with a local police officer. Year 2 complete a first-aid course and each class elects a safety monitor.
- Pupils have a good understanding of different forms of bullying and believe that it is rare at St James'. They are confident that they could turn to any adult if they thought bullying was happening and that it would be dealt with effectively.

- Attendance is average and improving. The vast majority of pupils arrive at school on time.

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher and senior leadership team want the very best for the school and they have the expertise and determination to successfully steer whole-school improvement. Together with the governing body, they have an accurate view of the school's strengths and areas for further development.
- The area for improvement identified at the previous inspection has been dealt with effectively. All staff use a pupil tracking system which readily provides information to inform teachers' planning, including interventions to accelerate pupils' progress. Subject leaders' skills are effective in checking the progress of all groups of pupils in their areas of responsibility and implementing change to raise achievement.
- Tailored staff training is in place to drive whole-school improvement. This is a key factor in why the quality of teaching is usually consistently good. However, not enough benefit to all staff is derived from sharing the best practice in the school. However, the school is looking beyond to other schools to develop expertise further. Staff are set challenging targets which are directly linked to pay awards.
- The school pays for local authority training as and when it is needed. This has recently included training for the governing body in the process for appointing a new headteacher in the near future. This has proved most helpful in building the skills of governors in interview procedures and techniques.
- The curriculum ensures that pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is exceptional. The inspection took place during the school's 'Spiritual Week' when Reception children were fascinated by the artwork they created with a willow weaver. Year 1 had their first taste of yoga and delighted in taking on the physical and emotional characteristics of different animals. The inspector visited Year 2 pupils on their residential trip to Rydal Hall where they considered nature and all its wonders. Pupils' thoughtful prayers were hung from a prayer tree and the waterfall inspired thoughtful poetry.
- The primary school sport funding is being used to provide additional sporting activities, including gymnastics and orienteering sessions for pupils and staff. Some of these activities are taught by external coaches. Training is planned for supervisors to help improve opportunities for play and promote pupils' well-being at lunchtimes. The school's Activemark award reflects the range of opportunities pupils have to engage in sports.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors know the school's strengths and priorities because they visit school regularly and receive accurate reports from school leaders and staff. The governing body has carried out a thorough review of how it can improve the support and challenge it provides for the school. As a result, governors have attended further training from the local authority and are able to analyse data about pupils' progress, which enables them to challenge school leaders effectively. The governing body monitors the progress of pupils eligible for pupil premium to confirm that its spending is effective. Governors also check that the new sports funding is used to bring about improved access to sporting activities. They have an overview of the quality of teaching and how it is linked to the salary structure. They undertake statutory duties effectively, making sure that pupils and staff are safe, that safeguarding meets requirements and that the budget is well managed.

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	112297
Local authority	Cumbria
Inspection number	426251

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

Type of school	Infant
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	4–7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	132
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Dorothy Graham
Headteacher	Jan Potter
Date of previous school inspection	15 October 2008
Telephone number	01946 691970
Fax number	Not Applicable
Email address	admin@st-james-inf.cumbria.sch.uk

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