

St Paul's CofE Junior School

Hawcoat Lane, Barrow-in-Furness, Cumbria, LA14 4HF

Inspection dates 24–25 June 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		Outstanding	1
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Leaders have created a school where respect and care for everyone are at the heart of everything it does. The school is an extremely harmonious community in which pupils make good progress from their different starting points and achieve well.
- Teaching is typically good with teachers consistently providing interesting activities that excite pupils' imaginations and capture their interest.
- Skilled and committed teaching assistants play a very effective role in supporting the learning of small groups and individuals.
- The school's procedures for keeping pupils safe and secure are outstanding.
- Relationships are very strong. Pupils love coming to school.
- Pupils' behaviour is outstanding. They are extremely proud of their school and impeccably well-mannered.
- The curriculum and huge range of school clubs promote excellent spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- The headteacher's clear vision and high ambition for the school has led to improvements to teaching and achievement.
- Teachers value the support they receive from school leaders to improve their teaching and continually strive to become better teachers.
- Parents are extremely happy with the school. The school has their full confidence and trust.
- Governors give a strong level of challenge and support to the school. They have played an important role in ensuring improvements in provision.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Occasionally activities do not always provide enough challenge, especially for the most able pupils. When this happens, the rate at which pupils make progress slows.
- Teachers do not always refocus or adjust their teaching and activities well enough to ensure learning moves on at a consistently good rate.
- Marking does not always give pupils sufficient guidance on what they need to do to improve their work.
- The school improvement plan is not sufficiently well structured to ensure that the school's effectiveness rapidly becomes outstanding.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed nine lessons. In addition, the inspector made a number of short visits to lessons and listened to three pupils read from Year 3 and Year 6.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, the senior leader and all teachers. The inspector also met with one representative from the local authority and four governors including the Chair of the Governing Body.
- Discussions were held with parents who brought their children to school.
- The inspector took account of 15 responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View, along with 37 printed versions of the online questionnaire and the outcomes of conversations with parents during the inspection.
- The inspector also considered the views expressed in the 10 responses to the staff questionnaire.
- The inspector observed the school at work and scrutinised the work in pupils' books, the school's own data on pupils' current progress, the school's improvement plans, planning and monitoring information and minutes of governing body meetings. Records relating to behaviour and attendance, and documents relating to safeguarding and child protection were also considered.

Inspection team

Anthony Kingston, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This is a smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- The proportion of pupils supported through school action is below average.
- The proportion of pupils supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is well-above average.
- The proportion of pupils eligible for support through the pupil premium (additional funding for those pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and those looked after by the local authority) is well-below average.
- Virtually all pupils are White British and speak English as their first language.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in English and mathematics.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the proportion of outstanding teaching and raise pupils' attainment by:
 - quickly amending activities when pupils find the work too easy or too hard, to make certain they are always fully challenged
 - ensuring that teachers' marking and feedback informs pupils how they can improve their work and that time is given for them to respond to teachers' comments.
- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management by ensuring the plan for improvement includes measurable targets that will help gauge the success of action that is taken.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Pupils generally enter the school with skills in reading, writing and mathematics that are average. In 2012, standards by the end of Year 6 were well-above average in reading, writing and mathematics. In 2013, standards dipped to average. This decline was due to the relatively small number of pupils in the cohort and their individual starting points.
- School leaders have made significant changes to the structure of the groups in which pupils are taught and are now aiming much higher and providing the challenge needed to ensure more pupils make better than expected progress. This has resulted in rapid gains in pupils' progress and is reflected in the significant improvements in the standards now being attained in reading, writing and mathematics across all year groups.
- The school's predictions for pupils' standards have been accurate for the previous three years. Projections for 2014 indicate that standards in reading, writing and mathematics will be well above the 2013 national average. Inspection evidence, including lesson observations, scrutiny of pupils' work, discussions with pupils and an analysis of internal school performance data confirm the school's view.
- Pupils are enthusiastic readers. This was exemplified by a group of Year 6 pupils who agreed that, 'You can just get lost in a book, visit different times and places and meet the most amazing characters.' They read and are read to every day at school. Virtually all read daily at home.
- Teachers use a range of methods to make sure that those who may struggle with reading are helped to catch up. Consequently, the school has adopted and extended the infant school's system for teaching phonics (letters and the sounds they make). This is having a positive impact on improving pupils' reading skills, particularly in Year 3.
- Pupils are confident writers. Their writing is helped by the emphasis that is given to reading, which boosts the range of words they understand and use, and to speaking and explaining ideas in lessons. Through this process pupils learn how to improve their own sentences and how authors use rich and exciting language in their books. This is increasingly reflected throughout pupils' writing as seen in the vibrant vocabulary, which enhances the fluency and meaning of what they write.
- Pupils make good progress in mathematics because they have a positive 'can do' approach which teachers encourage. Pupils have a good grasp of skills in calculating numbers and solving mental arithmetic problems, and select a range of methods to solve problems confidently.
- The school promotes and checks that all pupils have equal opportunities. As a result all groups of pupils, including disabled pupils and those with special educational needs, make the same good progress.
- The progress of the most able pupils is similar to that of their peers. As a result the proportion reaching the higher Level 5 has been average for the past two years. However, inspection evidence indicates that the proportion reaching this level is likely to be above average in 2014.
- Pupil premium funding is used effectively to provide additional time for teaching assistants to support pupils' learning and nurturing activities. In 2013 the very small number of this group of pupils in Year 6 makes any comparison with their classmates in the standards they attained in reading, writing and mathematics difficult. However, the progress made and standards attained by pupils currently supported by the pupil premium funding, including those known to be eligible for free school meals are close to, or better than, their classmates in reading, writing and mathematics.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching is typically good. Teachers generally plan imaginative activities that excite and motivate pupils to succeed. However, not enough teaching is outstanding to ensure that more pupils make outstanding progress from their individual starting points.

- The work of the headteacher has enabled teachers to use data about pupils' performance more effectively. As a result teachers expect, and ensure, faster progress from their pupils than in previous years.
- All lessons are characterised by excellent relationships between teachers and pupils. This means that pupils are confident learners prepared to try hard. They are unafraid of making mistakes, knowing that they will learn from them. Pupils always listen attentively and when asked to work on their own or in a group they do so enthusiastically, enabling them to learn well.
- Staff's knowledge and enthusiasm for subjects, together with high expectations, result in excellent attitudes to learning, exemplary behaviour and an exceptional willingness from pupils to respond to questions and the challenges set for them.
- Pupils learn well because teachers use assessment information and questioning to gauge pupils' understanding and learning to ensure that work is sufficiently challenging for pupils. However, occasionally the work set is either too easy or too hard. When this occurs, teachers do not always act quickly enough to put this right and provide a more appropriate level of challenge. As a result progress slows and prevents pupils making the progress of which they are capable, especially for the most able.
- By the end of Year 6 pupils are well prepared to make the move to secondary education, confident that they will be successful.
- The marking of pupils' work is good. It carefully explains what pupils are doing well and what they need to do to improve. Marking is most effective when pupils are encouraged to correct their errors and respond to teachers' comments. However, this practice is not applied consistently across the school and, as a result, some pupils continue to make the same errors.
- Skilled and dedicated teaching assistants provide extremely strong support, working and planning alongside teachers to ensure that effective extra support really benefits those who need it. As a result many pupils identified as having special educational needs make good progress.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding. In lessons it is of a consistently high quality. They show very high levels of engagement and enthusiasm in their work, reflecting their exemplary attitudes to learning. Pupils show a love of reading and a thirst for and enjoyment in learning.
- Pupils treat one another and their teachers with the greatest respect and courtesy. This is a hallmark of the school. One pupil exemplified this by saying, 'We live every day by our school motto that we are a small school with a big heart.' This was proudly supported by many others with one declaring, 'Everyone is a friend.'
- Older pupils provide outstanding role models for younger pupils.
- Pupils of all ages have many opportunities to take on responsible roles, such as being an active and proud member of the school council, acting as an ambassador when escorting visitors around the school or tending the extensive school gardens and grounds. Pupils relish taking on roles of responsibility because, as one said, 'We are turning into young adults and we should learn how to shoulder responsibilities. Anyway it's only right for us to do something in return for all that our teachers do for us.'
- Pupils enjoy coming to school and say they are proud to be a pupil there. As a result attendance is well-above average. They are punctual in the morning and many stay for the vast range of clubs and activities at the end of each day. Exclusions are exceptionally rare.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is outstanding.
- Pupils' well-being and welfare are taken very seriously. The headteacher and staff pursue every avenue to make sure that pupils' needs are met.
- The pupils have an extensive knowledge of ways to keep themselves safe when near water, on the road and using the internet or a mobile phone. It is promoted exceptionally well by the school's pro-active approach in teaching them to recognise potential dangers.
- Pupils have an excellent understanding of the different types of and what constitutes bullying.

They assert that bullying is extremely rare and that there is always an adult to speak to if they have any worries or concerns. One pupil said, 'Teachers always take care of us. Any problem is sorted straight away.'

- Virtually all parents who responded to Parent View say that behaviour is very good and the school keeps their children safe. Staff are equally positive. Inspection evidence confirms these views.

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher provides inspirational leadership, with a clear and uncompromising focus on developing the whole child through excellent provision. She has created a highly successful and motivated team who share the same high ambitions for the pupils. There are many positive comments from staff in support of this, for example, 'I am proud to be part of this school. Everyone is always willing to go the extra mile for staff and pupils alike.'
- All staff are overwhelmingly positive about the school and very supportive of the changes the headteacher has introduced.
- All teachers take on subject responsibilities and the headteacher has very successfully developed them into a strong team. They are enthusiastic and knowledgeable about the subjects they lead and contribute effectively to improving the quality of teaching across the school and raising standards across the curriculum.
- Rigorous systems are in place to check the school's performance and inform improvement priorities effectively. As a result self-evaluation is accurate.
- The school's plan for improvement is based on an accurate understanding of areas of strength and where improvement is needed. However, while the targets and actions within it are appropriate and accurately prioritised, there are too few measurable milestones to provide a clear sense of strategic direction the school intends to take if its effectiveness is to become outstanding.
- The headteacher has put in place an exceptionally robust system to check the quality of teaching and for managing staff performance. Clear targets are set and staff are given support and training to ensure they are well placed to meet them. Staff are overwhelmingly positive about the level of support they get to develop their professional skills.
- The curriculum has improved since the last inspection, especially through the use of themes which capture pupils' interests and create meaningful opportunities for them to apply and develop their reading, writing and mathematical skills.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted exceptionally well. There is a strong culture of personal responsibility. Pupils clearly know right from wrong, get on extremely well together and thoroughly enjoy the vast range of social and cultural activities on offer. Excellent assemblies, such as those celebrating achievement, clearly show the outstanding relationships between the headteacher, staff and pupils.
- There are excellent links with parents, who are very pleased with the education their children receive. Those who responded to the online Parent View or sent in printed versions were exceptionally positive about the school and what it provides. This was exemplified by one parent and reflected in the views of many others that, 'St Paul's may be small but it's an exceptionally great school.'
- The school makes good use of the primary school sports funding. A broad range of sporting activities are provided, both during and after school. Clubs are well attended and pupils thoroughly enjoy being able to develop and extend their sporting skills, including sports such as tri-golf, tennis, tag rugby, gymnastics, and dance. Staff also benefit from training managed by appropriately qualified and skilled coaches.
- The local authority knows the school well and provides good support for school leaders as they rapidly add to and build upon the school's many developing strengths.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body is working effectively with school staff to build further on the school's

record of improvement. They visit the school regularly to gain first-hand experience of the work of the school. Governors scrutinise information about the school's performance and challenge school leaders about how further improvement can be secured. This means that the decisions about funding, for example to ensure that in phonics, English grammar and mathematics pupils are taught in small groups by experienced and effective teachers and teaching assistants, are well informed. They are knowledgeable about the quality of the school's work, for example how pupils' attainment compares with that of pupils locally and nationally. They allocate and track finances carefully to evaluate the outcomes of spending; for example, they ensure that the pupil premium funding is spent appropriately and they are well informed about the impact this funding is having. They also check that the additional funding for sport is having the intended impact. The governing body makes sure that safeguarding and child-protection procedures meet requirements.

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	112406
Local authority	Cumbria
Inspection number	443938

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	7–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	96
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Vanda Brown
Headteacher	Ruth Webster
Date of previous school inspection	26 November 2009
Telephone number	01229 822211
Fax number	Not applicable
Email address	admin@st-pauls.cumbria.sch.uk

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