

St Begh's Catholic Junior School

Coach Road, Whitehaven, Cumbria, CA28 7TE

Inspection dates 8–9 July 2014

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

- Pupils' overall progress is not consistently good across all classes and subjects. In mathematics, pupils' attainment has been below average for the last two years and progress is slower than that found nationally.
- Pupils are not always given tasks which not only engage their interest but also deepen their understanding and accelerate their progress in mathematics. They do not always have clear pointers for improving their work in mathematics.
- In English, pupils' skills in writing are restricted because teaching provides too few opportunities for pupils to practise their skills when writing at length.
- Work set for pupils is sometimes not sufficiently challenging to enable them to build on previous learning, move on to new tasks rapidly and make good progress.
- Links with the feeder infant schools, although now improving, have not been close enough to ensure pupils' progress can be measured against an agreed starting point when they enter Year 3.
- Middle leaders are not effective enough in monitoring and leading the work of their subject areas.
- Good practice in teaching within the school and that of other schools is not shared sufficiently to improve the overall quality of teaching.

The school has the following strengths

- Since the last inspection leaders, managers and governors have tackled weaknesses and staff have worked together to bring about improvements in teaching and in pupils' achievement.
- Pupils' behaviour is good and they feel safe in school. Attendance has risen and is now above average.
- Governors are now monitoring the work of the school more thoroughly and are more closely involved in determining its strategic direction.
- Staff have confidence in the calm and supportive leadership of the new headteacher and staff morale is good.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness is developed well.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 15 lessons and part-lessons. The headteacher and inspectors together made several shorter visits to classrooms. Inspectors listened to pupils read.
- Discussions were held with parents, pupils, staff, governors and a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors observed the school's work and looked at pupils' books, progress data, safeguarding information and other documentation.
- Thirteen responses to the online questionnaire, 'Parent View', were considered as well 65 responses to similar questionnaires distributed by the school. Questionnaires completed by school staff were also scrutinised.

Inspection team

Ann Ashdown, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Simon Bramwell	Additional Inspector
Sue Sharkey	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This junior school is larger than the average-sized primary school.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium, which provides additional funding for children in the care of the local authority and pupils known to be eligible for free school meals, is below average.
- A well-below average proportion of pupils are from minority ethnic backgrounds, while a below average proportion speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs who are supported at school action is well-above average while the proportion supported at school action plus and with a statement of special educational needs is below average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- Most pupils join St Begh's from one feeder infant school, St Gregory and St Patrick's Catholic Community School.
- The headteacher was appointed in February 2014 having been acting headteacher since April 2013.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching by;
 - ensuring pupils are challenged to achieve their best and all teachers have high expectations of what they can do
 - increase pupils' pace of learning and build on what they already know by moving them on quickly to the next task as soon as they are ready.
- Raise attainment and accelerate pupils' progress by;
 - ensuring teachers plan a wide variety of tasks in mathematics that systematically develop pupils' skills and deepen their understanding
 - ensuring marking in mathematics gives pupils specific pointers on how to improve their work and reach their targets
 - providing pupils with more opportunities to write at length.
- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management by:
 - working much more closely with feeder schools in assessing pupils' attainment so that their progress can be accurately monitored as they move through the school
 - further developing the roles of subject leaders in monitoring the work of their subjects particularly as they implement the new curriculum
 - giving staff more opportunities to observe good and outstanding practice both within and beyond the school and monitor the impact of this on improving the quality of teaching.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Pupils' progress requires improvement because in some classes and in some subjects attainment is below average and progress is slower than that found nationally. Not enough pupils are making better than expected progress. However pupils' progress is now more carefully monitored and school data shows that, although not yet consistently good, it is beginning to accelerate.
- The school's baseline testing and inspection evidence shows that pupils enter Year 3 with attainment which is broadly average. The large gap previously found between test results at the end of Year 2 and the school's own test results at the beginning of Year 3 is now narrowing partly because there are closer links with feeder schools to accurately establish pupils' attainment. However, this work is at an early stage and even closer links are needed to ensure there is an agreed starting point for Year 3 pupils against which their progress can be measured.
- Pupils' progress is variable as they move through the school. The school's own reliable tracking data and work in pupils' books shows that, for current pupils, progress slows in Year 4. Throughout the school progress is stronger in reading than in writing and mathematics.
- Test scores attained by Year 6 pupils since the last inspection are broadly average overall but weakest in mathematics. New initiatives to provide pupils with a greater variety of relevant tasks in mathematics are increasing their enthusiasm for the subject but are not yet allowing them to make consistently good progress.
- In English most pupils become confident readers and speak with enthusiasm about books they have read. However in some classes their writing skills lag behind those of their reading because they have insufficient opportunities to write at length.
- Test results in 2013 showed a gap of approximately two terms in the attainment in mathematics and English of pupils eligible for pupil premium funding and their peers. However, this funding is being wisely spent on increasing the amount of small group and one-to-one tuition given and gaps in the progress made by those eligible for free school meals and their classmates are now beginning to close.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs receive increasingly sharply focused help from teachers and teaching assistants. Consequently, their rates of progress are accelerating and in some cases they make better progress than their classmates. The small number of minority ethnic pupils and those who speak English as an additional language make similar progress to their peers.
- The most able pupils make the same progress as their classmates. A below-average proportion of pupils achieved the higher grades in tests in mathematics and English in 2013.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- Work in pupils' books and that seen in lessons and displayed on walls all confirm that teaching over time requires improvement as the variation in teachers' expectations means that pupils do not make consistently good progress.
- Pupils' books are marked regularly and in English they are given clear pointers for improvement. In mathematics, marking is less helpful and pupils are not always sure how to improve their work to reach their targets.
- In some classes, such as in Year 5 and Year 6, pupils make faster progress because teachers have higher expectations of what pupils can achieve, tasks are challenging and pupils move on quickly to the next activity. However, this is not always the case and pupils' progress slows when tasks are less challenging and more repetitive and do not allow pupils to build upon their previous learning.
- In mathematics, more interesting, practical tasks are now helping to engage pupils' interest and make learning fun; however, teachers are not planning work well enough so that pupils learn

new skills or deepen their understanding in a progressive and systematic way.

- In English, pupils do not always have sufficient opportunities to develop their writing skills by regularly writing at length. An exception to this is in Year 6 where pupils relished the opportunity to empathise with soldiers in the First World War and composed sensitive and perceptive letters to an unknown soldier.
- In lessons, disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs are given skilled and sensitive support from teachers and teaching assistants to enable them to become more confident learners.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness is developed well. Pupils' spiritual awareness is partly developed through the strong Catholic ethos which permeates the school. Pupils make regular use of a prayer room and contribute to the prayer corner in classrooms to express their feelings. Pupils add to their cultural understanding by studying other countries, races and religions.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Pupils show kindness and respect towards each other, staff and visitors. They move sensibly around the school and behave well in the dining room. Pupils come to school ready to learn and are proud of their school.
- Pupils' enjoyment of learning is reflected in their above-average attendance and punctuality.
- In lessons most pupils answer questions readily, work hard and are keen to succeed. A few pupils lose interest when tasks do not interest them or challenge them.
- Records show that pupils typically behave well and incidents of serious misbehaviour such as bullying are rare and swiftly dealt with. Exclusions are very rare. The school is proactive in managing behaviour and, for example, is now earmarking a separate area of the school yard for football so this does not dominate and inhibit play for other groups of pupils.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Pupils say that they feel safe in school and their comments confirm that bullying is rare and soon dealt with.
- Pupils have a good understanding of the different types of bullying, including homophobic and cyber-bullying and are aware of the dangers of drug and alcohol abuse.
- Parents are confident that the school keeps their children safe and the vast majority are pleased with the education the school provides. Opportunities for parents to join their children in school, such as the family lunch, are welcomed and enjoyed not only by parents but also by grandparents and pre-school brothers and sisters.

The leadership and management requires improvement

- Leadership and management require improvement because although school leaders have been successful in improving the school since the last inspection not enough has been done as yet to improve pupils' achievement and the quality of teaching.
- Middle managers have not yet developed their skills fully in leading and monitoring the work of their subject areas. However, these skills are developing as they plan for the implementation of the new curriculum. Links with feeder schools are improving but further collaboration is needed to ensure a common baseline on entry to Year 3 from which pupils' progress can be measured.
- Good practice in teaching has begun to be shared. Some teachers plan work together, share their best skills and have undertaken visits to other schools to observe good practice. However, the impact of this work has yet to be seen in improving the quality of teaching across the school.
- Appropriate areas for further development have been identified. Staff performance is well managed. Staff feel valued and well supported under the calm and determined leadership of the headteacher. All staff are keen to improve their skills and consequently the school is well placed to improve further.
- All pupils are given equal opportunities to succeed. Discrimination of any kind is not tolerated.

Extra funding such as the pupil premium is well spent and is increasingly effective in closing the gaps in the progress made by different groups of pupils. Primary sports funding has also been well spent on extra coaching for pupils and training for staff. Girls and boys spoke enthusiastically about the success of their football teams and their developing skills in break dancing. Pupils have every opportunity to develop healthy lifestyles, improve their physical well-being and perform to the best of their ability.

- The local authority provides appropriate support for the school through the general advisor who assists with school improvement and the analysis of performance data.
- Safeguarding meets requirements. Staff are well trained and knowledgeable about, for example, child protection and risk-assessment procedures.
- The curriculum is broad and balanced but does not yet allow all pupils to consistently develop good basic skills, particularly in mathematics. However, it has strengths in the wide range of enrichment activities it provides, which a glance at the school's informative website clearly shows. Pupils enjoy a range of visits to places as varied as Liverpool and Lockerbie and a host of other interesting activities such as designing 'menus' for astronauts in the European space station.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governance has improved since the last inspection. Governors now monitor the work of the school regularly. They are well informed about the quality of teaching and how good teaching is rewarded through pay and weaknesses tackled. They have made recent appointments of senior staff and provide both support and challenge for them. They understand how the school is performing in relation to other schools. Finances are well managed and the school is held to account for the spending of extra funds such as the pupil premium.

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	112354
Local authority	Cumbria
Inspection number	442384

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	297
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Stephen Scott
Headteacher	Catherine Mallard
Date of previous school inspection	26 February 2013
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