

Victoria Infant and Nursery School

Oxford Street, Barrow-in-Furness, Cumbria LA14 5QN

Inspection dates

8–9 March 2016

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

Effectiveness of leadership and management	Requires improvement
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Requires improvement
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Requires improvement
Early years provision	Requires improvement
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- Leaders have not established consistently good or better teaching across the school.
- Improvement plans do not outline clearly enough what leaders are trying to achieve. Consequently, it is difficult for leaders and governors to judge whether planned improvements are making any difference.
- Governors do not have a clear enough view of how well the school is performing. As a result, they have not held leaders to account for low pupil outcomes. They do not receive information about pupils' performance regularly, and when they do, the challenge to leaders is not robust enough.
- Teachers do not always receive clear enough guidance from leaders on how their teaching can improve.
- Teachers do not consistently follow the agreed marking policy of the school. As a result, pupils are not fully aware of how they can improve their work.
- Pupils' outcomes in mathematics are not high enough and improvements are slow. This is because the tasks set for pupils, especially the most able, are not always well matched to their abilities.
- In the Early Years Foundation Stage, teachers do not have a clear understanding of children's skills and abilities when they enter Nursery or Reception. It is therefore difficult to judge how much progress children make from their starting points. The early years leader does not have a strategic view over Nursery and Reception classes.

The school has the following strengths

- The new headteacher is well aware of the school's strengths and weaknesses and has led the school through a turbulent period of change. Some improvement can be seen, such as in current pupils' progress in writing. The headteacher has the full support of staff and governors.
- Leaders have ensured that the vast majority of pupils attend school regularly.
- Disadvantaged pupils and those who have special needs or disability make good progress because of the strong and well targeted support they receive.
- Pupils feel safe, are happy and behave well. This view is confirmed by the overwhelming majority of parents.
- The teaching of reading is strong and enables pupils to make good progress in this subject.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching, learning and assessment, to accelerate the progress made by all pupils, by ensuring that:
 - teachers plan activities which challenge pupils of all abilities, especially the most able
 - all teachers consistently follow the agreed marking policy and make sure that pupils know how to improve their learning
 - pupils, especially the most able, have more opportunities to broaden and deepen their understanding in mathematics by completing more activities which require them to solve problems and explain their thinking.

- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management by ensuring that:
 - action plans have clear targets, so that leaders and governors can more easily check on the progress made towards achieving them and teachers know what they are aiming towards
 - checks on teaching provide individual teachers with the guidance needed to help them improve their practice
 - governors receive training so they are more aware of how the school's performance compares to that of other schools, enabling them to ask more searching questions in meetings
 - governors receive timely and detailed information about pupil performance to help them challenge leaders and hold them more closely to account.

- Improve the Early Years Foundation Stage by ensuring that:
 - there is an accurate understanding of starting points for both individuals and groups of children in the Nursery
 - the learning environment, both indoors and outdoors, provides a richer source of opportunities for children to encounter meaningful print and purposes for reading
 - leadership arrangements for the Early Years Foundation Stage are more robust and rigorous and encompass both the Nursery and Reception classes
 - children's independence is better developed, so that adults can more easily assess what children can do and plan activities which help to move their learning forward.

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

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management requires improvement

- Leaders and governors have not secured good or better teaching in all classes. As a result, not enough pupils reach the standards expected of them by the time they leave the school, especially in mathematics. Not enough pupils are well prepared for the next stage in their learning.
- Leaders have an accurate picture of where the school's strengths and weaknesses lie, but plans for improvement are not clear enough. Although the planned actions are appropriate, there are no specific measures which outline what leaders are trying to achieve. It is therefore difficult to judge whether efforts to improve are making any difference.
- Leaders do not always provide governors with enough detailed information around the performance of all pupils and specific groups of pupils. This has contributed to governors' lack of challenge in meetings.
- The newly formed senior leadership team is now more involved in monitoring standards within the school and within subject areas. There is some evidence of improvement, for example the improved progress that current pupils are making with their writing. When checks are made on the quality of teaching, general findings are shared with all teachers to effect improvement. Leaders need to develop this practice further by providing more specific guidance to individual teachers.
- The new headteacher has gained the confidence of staff, who are all well motivated and keen to improve. She has carried a heavy load since joining the school and has made important decisions which have prepared the ground for improvement. Parents are overwhelmingly supportive of the headteacher and the large majority would recommend the school to others.
- Leaders have ensured that the additional funding received for disadvantaged pupils and pupils with disabilities or special needs is spent well. These pupils make good progress because the support they need is timely and meets their needs well. The new leader for pupils who have special educational needs or disability has quickly established effective systems to support those pupils who need extra help.
- Leaders make effective use of the sport premium funding, which helps to provide a range of activities. Funding has been spent on providing resources to help keep pupils active, both in physical education lessons and also when they are playing outside. The funding has also enabled a wider range of clubs to take place, such as multi-skills, dance and football, which are all enjoyed by the pupils. More opportunities for pupils to take part in events are now provided, where pupils compete or perform with other schools through dance and football.
- The curriculum is broad and balanced. Leaders have placed an emphasis on bringing the curriculum to life, to engage and excite pupils to learn: for example, pupils have witnessed hatching chicks and caterpillars emerging into butterflies. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is well provided for through the study of different faiths. Pupils have a link with a school in Ethiopia, for which they raise valuable funds, as well as raising funds for more local charities.
- Leaders are promoting British values well. Pupils are developing their understanding of democracy through the voting system for the school council. They learn about tolerance by celebrating difference and recent changes to the behaviour policy have included an update on school rules which link to the rule of law. Pupils are also learning about the royal family and celebrate 'Britishness' in other ways, such as marking special days, for example St George's Day.
- The support and challenge provided by the local authority has been ineffective. They have not challenged leaders and governors strongly enough around low outcomes. The local authority has been too reliant on leaders receiving challenge from local school partnerships which have not effectively held leaders to account.
- **The governance of the school**
 - Although governors have an understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses, they are not fully aware of how the school's performance compares with other schools.
 - Governors do not receive timely information regarding pupil performance. When they do receive such information, records from meetings show that they do not challenge leaders deeply enough to improve.
 - Governors have received training and information from the new headteacher, but more needs to be done to enable them to support and challenge leaders more effectively.
 - Governors have worked closely with the new headteacher to manage a difficult budget and oversee a turbulent period of staffing changes. The ground has been prepared well for the future.

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Appropriate checks are completed on new staff to ensure that pupils are kept safe. Leaders have ensured that safeguarding practice is in line with the most up-to-date legislation and staff receive copies and updates of any changes to procedure. Leaders ensure that staff receive timely training in keeping pupils safe, including from the threats of radicalisation and extremism. Leaders and governors have completed training around the safe recruitment of staff. School records show that, where pupils are potentially vulnerable to harm, they are well protected and supported by staff in order to keep them safe. Pupils say that they feel safe in school and all parents who responded to Parent View (Ofsted's online parent questionnaire) agreed that their children feel safe in school.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment **requires improvement**

- Teaching is too variable across classes and subjects. The teaching of mathematics in particular is not strong enough to ensure that pupils reach the standards of which they are capable. Activities planned for pupils do not consistently provide them with suitable challenge to match their abilities. In particular, the most-able pupils complete work which does not challenge them enough. They do not have regular opportunities to solve problems or to use reasoning to explain their mathematical thinking.
- Not all teachers are consistently following the agreed marking policy of the school. Consequently, pupils do not have a clear enough understanding of what they need to do next to move their learning forwards.
- The newly formed senior leadership team is starting to hold teachers to account by meeting regularly with them to discuss pupils' progress. Leaders are also starting to observe teaching and check pupils' learning in books. There are signs of success: for example, current pupils are making stronger progress in writing. However, inconsistencies in mathematics remain.
- The teaching of reading has a high priority, and as a result, pupils achieve well. Pupils are developing a good understanding of phonics (letters and the sounds that they make) and this helps them to master the skills of reading. By the time they leave the school, pupils' abilities in reading are in line with what is expected.
- Relationships between teachers and pupils and between pupils themselves are consistently positive. Classrooms are calm and orderly; pupils listen intently and are ready to learn. Support staff are well informed of learning intentions and engage well in pupils' learning.
- Teachers' explanations are usually clear. They also question pupils effectively to see what pupils already know and then guide them to new learning.
- Pupils who fall behind in their learning are noticed quickly. Extra support for these pupils is prioritised well, to those most in need, so they can rejoin the path of success.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare **is good**

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Leaders promote a calm and welcoming atmosphere which fosters confidence in pupils. Pupils are self-assured and communicate their ideas well in class and when speaking to visitors. They work together well, sharing their thoughts and ideas with their friends.
- Pupils know how to keep themselves safe and feel safe in school. Because leaders celebrate 'safer internet day' every year, pupils also have a good knowledge of how to stay safe online.
- Leaders promote strong relationships by establishing respect for different faiths and by celebrating difference. The positive ethos in school promotes a sense of belonging. Pupils are proud to be part of this community.
- Pupils and families benefit from a daily breakfast and after-school club which is managed by the school. Pupils spoken to enjoy these sessions, where they catch up with friends and are well looked after.
- The overwhelming majority of parents who responded to Parent View agreed that pupils feel safe and are well looked after. These parents are confident that the school works well to promote the effective personal development and welfare of their children.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.

- Pupils are polite and well mannered. They listen well and respond readily to instructions from adults.
- Leaders have introduced a new behaviour system of rewards and sanctions which is well known by pupils. They are keen to behave well and accept the rewards of good behaviour on Friday afternoons, when they enjoy fun activities if they have behaved well all week. Equally, they are keen to avoid the sanctions resulting from poor behaviour.
- Pupils have a good understanding of the different types of bullying. They say that bullying is very rare in school. They would be confident that it would be dealt with quickly if it happened, the same way that any occasional poor behaviour is dealt with.
- Regular attendance is a high priority for leaders. Attendance is high and few pupils are persistently absent. Leaders have effective systems in place to make sure that good attendance remains the norm, working well with families who do not always make sure that their children attend regularly.

Outcomes for pupils

require improvement

- The proportion of pupils reaching the expected standard in mathematics has been significantly below the national average for the last two years. Work in pupils' books does not present a convincing case that current pupils are making better progress.
- Work in pupils' writing books shows that current pupils are starting to make stronger progress. However, not enough pupils meet the standards expected of them in writing by the time they leave the school. Consequently, pupils are not well prepared for the next stage in their learning.
- The most-able pupils do not achieve as well as they should, because their work is not always matched well to their abilities. Work in pupils' books shows that these pupils rarely make mistakes – an indication that their work lacks challenge. They do not have to think deeply or broadly enough and this limits their gains in learning.
- The teaching of phonics is strong and has resulted in pupils quickly grasping the skills required to read well. As a result, a good majority of pupils have passed the national phonics check in Year 1 for the last two years.
- Disadvantaged pupils and those who have special needs or disability are supported well in their learning and make good progress from their starting points.
- Pupils make good progress with their reading. The proportion of pupils reaching the expected standards when they leave the school are at least in line with the national average.

Early years provision

requires improvement

- The leadership and management of the Nursery and Reception classes are not cohesive enough. Staff in Nursery and Reception do not work sufficiently closely. There is a lack of awareness of what children can and cannot do and staff do not keep a close enough eye on children's progress across the two settings.
- By the time children leave Reception, the proportion of children who reach a good level of development is broadly in line with the national average. However, it is difficult for leaders to judge how much progress is made from their starting points because the systems to measure children's abilities when they start Nursery and Reception class are not secure.
- Opportunities are not always taken to extend children's learning, especially when children are working outside. Adults do not interact well enough with children to guide their learning, question them or encourage them to take part in meaningful activities. The outdoor spaces, in particular, do not have enough examples of meaningful print, such as signs, letters, numbers or words. This limits children's opportunities to read or count purposefully.
- The tasks set for children sometimes limit their opportunities to 'have a go' and to learn independently. Too much emphasis is placed on children completing tasks through direction, rather than seeing what the children know already and guiding the child through the learning progress. Large group activities do not always hold the attention of all children, because there are only a selected few who take part in activities. Other children become distracted and start to lose interest.
- Children make good progress in their personal, social and emotional skills, thanks to the positive and welcoming relationships which are promoted by all staff. Children enter Reception classes and Nursery

happily each morning and quickly settle into tasks because there are clearly established routines. Children behave well and generally work well together, for example by taking turns.

- Children who are disadvantaged and those who have special needs or disability make good progress. Their progress is monitored closely and where it starts to slip, teachers are quick to establish targeted support to help get children back on track.

School details

Unique reference number	112210
Local authority	Cumbria
Inspection number	10003576

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Infant and nursery
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	256
Appropriate authority	the governing body
Chair	Mrs Linda Last
Headteacher	Lucie Phelps
Telephone number	01229 812537
Website	www.victoria-barrow-inf.cumbria.sch.uk
Email address	secretary@victoria-barrow-inf.cumbria.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	16–17 March 2011

Information about this school

- This is a broadly average-sized infant and nursery school.
- The percentage of pupils known to be eligible for support through the pupil premium is below average. The pupil premium is additional government funding to support pupils who are eligible for free school meals or looked after by the local authority.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs or disability is below average.
- The vast majority of pupils are White British. Very few pupils speak English as an additional language.
- There is a breakfast and after-school club which is managed by the school.
- Since the last inspection, a new headteacher has been appointed. Two new assistant headteachers have also been appointed to the senior leadership team and a new leader for pupils who have special education needs or disability was appointed in September 2015. Three new teachers were appointed to the school in September 2015.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed lessons in all classes and in a range of subjects. The headteacher observed learning in five classrooms, alongside the lead inspector, on the first day of inspection.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour in classrooms and assessed the school's promotion of spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Inspectors also observed pupils in the playground and during lunchtime.
- Inspectors looked at work in pupils' books and in the learning journals of children in the early years.
- Inspectors held meetings with the headteacher, the two assistant headteachers, the special educational needs coordinator, the leader of the Early Years Foundation Stage and subject leaders. Inspectors met with four members of the governing body, including the Chair of the Governing Body. An inspector also had a telephone conversation with the school improvement advisor from the local authority.
- A group of six pupils discussed their opinions about the school and their learning with an inspector. An inspector listened to four pupils reading. Inspectors also spoke informally with pupils on the playground.
- Forty-two responses to Ofsted's online parent survey (Parent View) were considered and inspectors spoke with a number of parents who were dropping off pupils at school.
- Inspectors observed the school's work and looked at a number of documents, including information on pupils' outcomes, minutes from governing body meetings and other documented work of governors, the school's evaluation of its own performance and its school development plan. Behaviour and attendance records and information relating to safeguarding were also scrutinised.

Inspection team

Ian Hardman, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
David Woodhouse	Ofsted Inspector
Mavis Smith	Ofsted Inspector
Lesley Curtis	Ofsted Inspector

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