

St James' CofE Junior School

Wellington Row, Whitehaven, Cumbria CA28 7HG

Inspection dates

27–28 April 2016

Overall effectiveness

Good

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- Leaders and governors have successfully addressed the key issues identified at the last inspection.
- The quality of teaching is now good. Teachers plan purposeful lessons so that pupils learn well.
- Pupils enjoy school and this is shown in their good attendance and improved punctuality.
- Outcomes for pupils are good. Pupils make good progress from their different starting points, particularly in reading and mathematics. By the end of Year 6 they reach standards above the national average.
- Pupils get off to a good start when they join the school in Year 3. Leaders have improved transition arrangements so that the youngest pupils settle in quickly.
- Leaders ensure that the progress of all groups of pupils is closely tracked. They swiftly put in place support for any pupils falling behind, so that they catch up quickly.
- Pupils take their responsibilities as citizens seriously. They look after younger pupils, raise money for those less fortunate than themselves and actively engage with local community issues.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Pupils value each other's opinions; they listen carefully and respond thoughtfully.
- The governing body now provides effective support in moving the school forward. Governors understand their roles and responsibilities well and share an ambitious vision for the school.
- Pupils say they feel safe at school. They are taught how to keep themselves safe in other environments, including online.
- Leaders have made sure that parents get more frequent information about how their children are getting on. Staff make themselves available every day if parents have anything they wish to discuss.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- In mathematics, teachers do not make timely enough decisions about pupils' readiness to progress to the next stage, or provide pupils with enough opportunities to think hard and reason for themselves.
- Pupils are not given enough support to develop the skills and processes essential for writing, including planning, drafting and evaluating. As a result pupils do not achieve as well as they should in writing.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Accelerate progress in mathematics for all pupils and increase the proportion of pupils achieving above age-related expectations by ensuring that teachers:
 - use the information they have about pupils' learning to make timely decisions about their readiness to progress to the next stage
 - challenge the pupils who grasp concepts quickly with rich and sophisticated problems
 - provide all pupils with frequent opportunities to think hard and reason for themselves.

- Accelerate progress in writing for all pupils and increase the proportion of pupils achieving above age-related expectations by ensuring that teachers help pupils understand the writing process and apply their skills effectively.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management is good

- The headteacher and governing body have successfully introduced a raft of changes which have brought about improvements since the last inspection. The headteacher has secured the confidence and support of staff, parents and governors as she has addressed the areas of underperformance identified at the previous inspection. The headteacher and governing body have clearly demonstrated their capacity to make further improvements.
- The governing body, by their own admission, were 'complacent' prior to the last inspection. However, governors have since transformed the way in which they work. As a result, they now provide a good balance of challenge and support to the school, which is informed by an accurate view of all aspects of the school's performance.
- The headteacher is ably supported by the teachers in charge of reading and mathematics. Together they have improved the quality of teaching, learning and assessment across the school so that pupils make good progress from their different starting points. The headteacher has encouraged the teachers in charge of reading and mathematics to find out about how other schools have secured better outcomes for their pupils. They have made changes to how English and mathematics are taught, which are making a positive difference to the performance of current pupils.
- Since the last inspection, the headteacher has developed the role of middle and senior leaders in school. They have received good-quality training to help them carry out pupil interviews, work scrutinies and lesson observations. They are making good use of the information from these activities to inform their subject action plans. The teacher in charge of mathematics has put in place a number of interventions focused on improving outcomes for identified groups. On a weekly basis she works with a group of the most-able pupils to help them achieve the highest standards, as well as introducing mentoring for Year 6 pupils to make sure they are well prepared for the end of key stage assessment tests.
- The school's information about pupils' attainment and progress is accurate. Teachers use a range of evidence to inform their view of each pupil's performance. This information is thoroughly moderated both internally and with other schools locally. Pupils falling behind are swiftly identified and support is put in place to help them catch up quickly.
- The teacher in charge of physical education and sports has used the additional funding well to offer activities which encourage pupils who are more reluctant to take part in physical activity to learn playground games. The teacher has made sure that all pupils have a chance to represent the school if they wish; a number of pupils took part in a triathlon at a local sports centre. The school has achieved success in local athletics, cross-country and football competitions. In addition, pupils have enjoyed trying their hand at circus skills, paddle boarding, table tennis and fell walking.
- Governors hold leaders to account for the performance of disadvantaged pupils. They make sure that leaders use the pupil premium funding to remove barriers to learning and help those pupils catch up quickly with their peers. The headteacher knows the pupils and their families well and carefully targets resources. For example, the school prioritised disadvantaged pupils as part of a group of pupils using an online programme to accelerate their learning in mathematics. These pupils have made better progress than their peers, helping them to catch up more quickly.
- The headteacher and staff who work with pupils who have special educational needs or disability have a wealth of skills and experience, which they use to best effect in meeting the needs of this group. They attend training as necessary to make sure they are able to continue to meet the wide range of needs of pupils joining the school. Staff work closely with external agencies, taking heed of their advice and guidance. Parents appreciate the high-quality provision for their children as well as the support given to families where needed.
- Performance management processes are rigorous and robust. Targets are set which link to the school's priorities so teachers have a good understanding of their role in school improvement. Information is provided to governors so that they are able to understand how the headteacher is making decisions about teachers' salary progression and performance.
- The curriculum offered by the school is broad and balanced, making good use of the local area to provide pupils with many activities that engage and excite them in learning. Teachers use the national curriculum as the foundation for planning pupils' learning. The teachers often choose topics which link to current world or local events, such as the upcoming Olympics, through which they teach a number of subjects, including history and geography.

- Pupils have an excellent understanding of their roles and responsibilities as British citizens. Pupils get involved in local issues, such as dog owners not cleaning up after their pets; following this up by writing to the local newspaper as well as councillors to express their concerns. Pupils raised money on World Book Day for West Cumberland Special Care baby unit.
- **The governance of the school**
 - Senior leaders, staff, parents and pupils value the high profile of governors around school. The regular monitoring afternoons help governors to see first-hand the impact of decisions they are making. They talk to pupils about how well they are getting on, discuss curriculum developments with teachers, scrutinise school records, including behaviour logs, and closely analyse data provided by the headteacher. As a result, they have an accurate view of how well the school is doing and what it needs to do to improve further.
 - Governors have a much clearer understanding of their collective and individual roles and responsibilities. They have made good use of the support available to them through the local authority and diocese as well as the recent review of governance. As a result, they have made some changes which have improved their effectiveness, such as the establishment of a pupil progress and welfare sub-committee.
 - Governors have a shared vision for the school and know what needs to be in place to achieve this. Their management of the recent appointment of a new headteacher is testament to their high ambition for the school.
 - Governors are aware of their responsibilities to ensure the school's website complies with 'The School Information Regulations 2012' and have addressed any previous shortcomings.
- Safeguarding is effective. Checks on the suitability of staff to work with children are thorough. The child protection policy and procedures are fit for purpose and understood by all staff. Staff keep up to date through regular training. Pupils are confident that they are safe and well cared for and parents and staff agree. Pupils are taught how to keep themselves safe and know what to do if they are worried about anything.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good

- Teaching, learning and assessment have improved since the last inspection and are now good. Work seen in pupils' books shows that the teaching of literacy and numeracy skills has improved.
- Reading is taught well. The teacher in charge of reading has put in place a structured, systematic approach to teaching reading across the school. Teachers' improved subject knowledge, their more effective use of questioning and the introduction of high-quality texts covering a range of genres, are helping pupils to make better progress. Pupils are not deterred by challenging texts. For example, Year 6 pupils reading 'The Tyger' by William Blake were not deterred by the challenging language of the poem and thoughtfully considered what the poem might be about.
- Pupils are passionate about reading and look forward to choosing their books from the local library. When talking to the inspector, Year 6 pupils engaged in a lively discussion comparing *The Lord of the Rings* by J.R.R. Tolkien with *Harry Potter* by J.K. Rowling.
- The improvements put in place by the teacher in charge of mathematics are helping pupils to be more successful, so that they now have more positive attitudes towards mathematics. The development of a joint calculation policy with staff from the infant school has led to a more consistent approach across the two schools. This is making a positive difference for the younger pupils in school. The introduction of a weekly mentoring session for older pupils is correcting misconceptions, addressing gaps in pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding and increasing their confidence. The teacher in charge works well with her colleagues, providing targeted support to plan and deliver more effective mathematics lessons.
- Pupils are able to sustain their interest and concentration even with the most challenging tasks. In Year 4 mathematics for example, pupils persevered to find out how many different combinations of animals they could find which would have 14 legs in total. Pupils work well together and support each other. A parent told the inspector how the children are as proud of each other's successes as they are of their own. Pupils are confident to challenge ideas they do not agree with, adeptly articulating their point of view. For example, during an English lesson pupils debated the correct use of brackets in a piece of writing.
- Teachers in the early stages of their careers are well supported by experienced practitioners. As a result of bespoke training packages, carefully tailored to their individual needs, they are planning and delivering more effective lessons.
- Regular assessments of pupils' learning, informed by a range of evidence, provide teachers with an accurate view of how well pupils are performing. This data is used to inform frequent pupil progress

meetings which senior leaders use to have a meaningful dialogue with teachers about the achievement of their pupils. Any pupils falling behind are swiftly identified and appropriate support is put in place.

- Parents are now sent more frequent reports about their child's progress so that they have up-to-date information on how they are getting on. Parents who spoke to inspectors find this very helpful.
- The introduction of high-quality texts, as well as opportunities for pupils to write across a range of genres and the discrete teaching of grammar, punctuation and spelling, are helping pupils to make better progress. Pupils present their work with pride, taking care with their handwriting. Pupils told inspectors how they find teachers' feedback and marking helpful in improving their work. Pupils' work shows the good progress they make across each year group, particularly in grammar and spelling. However, pupils' understanding of how to edit and improve the composition of their writing is not developed as effectively. As a result, pupils are not making the same rates of progress in writing as they are in reading and mathematics.
- In mathematics teachers give pupils ample opportunity to consolidate their learning. However, too often teachers miss opportunities to challenge those pupils who are 'quick graspers' by offering them rich and sophisticated problems to deepen their understanding. Moreover, the tasks set by teachers do not give pupils enough challenges which require them to reason mathematically and solve problems, promoting their enjoyment and excitement about mathematics.
- For the most part, homework is carefully considered and supports pupils' learning in school. However, it is not consistently set and marked across all classes in line with the school's policy.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare is good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Older pupils take their responsibilities very seriously. A Year 6 pupil talked about his role as a buddy to a younger pupil as being a 'tough job' but explained that 'I've just got to keep at it'. Year 5 pupils are diligent in their roles as playground buddies and the school council was involved in the appointment of the new headteacher. They identified the skills and qualities they felt were important in their new school leader, interviewed candidates and fed back their views to governors on the recruitment panel.
- Pupils are taught how to be good citizens. They learn about the importance of the democratic process through the election of the school council. Each year the oldest pupils visit the Houses of Parliament, meet their local MP and take a tour of St Paul's Cathedral. Older pupils are currently learning about crime and punishment as part of the curriculum. During the inspection, Year 5 pupils were learning about how the police use witness statements in their work.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, cultural and social education is strong. Older children learn about the rights and wrongs of the past and consider whether the Football Association was successful in its campaign to 'kick racism out of football'. Pupils have found out about the impact of the recent floods on the local community.
- The staff have improved the transition arrangements for pupils moving up from the infant school. The new arrangements they have put in place are helping pupils settle into school more quickly. Parents spoke positively about the 'leaflet which helps them and their children know what to expect as they move up to the junior school'. Year 3 teachers visited pupils in their infant school prior to them moving up and Year 2 teachers have visited their pupils to see how well they are getting on.
- Pupils are safe and feel well cared for. They are confident that they can speak to adults in school if they have any concerns. Pupils have a good understanding of different types of bullying, including the use of derogatory language. A very small number of parents raised concerns about bullying. The pupils who spoke to inspectors were adamant that on the rare occasions when there is bullying, adults act quickly to put an end to it. Pupils find the restorative approaches used to follow up these incidents fair and effective. Staff and parents who spoke to inspectors support pupils' views.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils are proud of their school and are smartly dressed in their uniforms. When pupils are out on trips they are well behaved and this is noticed by members of the community. Pupils listen attentively to their teachers and each other. Pupils often work in small groups, confidently sharing their ideas with each other.
- Pupils enjoy the activities on offer at break and lunchtimes. For example, during the inspection, they enthusiastically participated in dancing and singing along with their favourite songs and creating a mini football pitch using chalk. Pupils told inspectors how much they enjoyed the new activities and had

noticed that behaviour had improved as pupils were engrossed in the activities. However, as this was the first time that lunchtime activities had been organised in this way, it is too early to measure the impact of the changes.

- Pupils enjoy school and this is reflected in their good attendance record. The school has worked successfully to ensure all pupils arrive at school on time every day. Pupils take responsibility for closing the gates promptly at 9 o'clock every day so that everyone knows that lessons have started. As a result, pupils' punctuality has improved.
- The headteacher discourages parents from taking their children out of school in term time and ensures that families who need additional help to get their children to school are well supported.
- Although the overwhelming majority of pupils take responsibility for their behaviour and maintain high standards at all times, there is a very small number of pupils who indulge in silly behaviour when not closely supervised. Teachers' vigilance ensures that these rare incidents of off-task behaviour are nipped in the bud and pupils' learning is not disrupted.

Outcomes for pupils

are good

- Current pupils are maintaining the momentum of improvement since the last inspection. All cohorts within the school make good progress and the majority of pupils are working securely within age-related expectations across the new curriculum.
- Pupils are well prepared for secondary school. The overwhelming majority attain standards in reading, writing and mathematics that are above the national average. Their academic achievements, together with well-developed personal and social skills, ensure that they are well equipped to deal with the rigours of the secondary curriculum
- Year 3 pupils get off to a good start, helped by the new transition arrangements between the infant and junior schools. Teachers have a better knowledge of the pupils before they join the school and use this to plan work that meets pupils' needs from their first day. Moreover, the school is providing parents with more information so that they can better support their child during this time.
- Pupils' progress in reading and mathematics has improved since the last inspection. For current cohorts, progress in writing is catching up with that in the other subjects. From their different starting points, all groups of pupils are making better progress across the school. Disadvantaged pupils are keeping pace with their peers in reading and writing. The school has put additional support in place in mathematics, which is helping pupils to catch up quickly with their peers.
- Pupils who have special educational needs or disability are well supported through carefully targeted provision to ensure that they make progress in line with their peers. In reading, pupils are given additional individual and small-group support to help them keep up.
- The proportion of pupils who achieve the higher levels at the end of Year 6 is above the national average. In mathematics, the teacher in charge delivers a weekly session targeted at the most-able pupils to help them reach their full potential.
- Boys' achievement shows year-on-year improvement in reading, writing and mathematics; however, the performance of girls has been erratic in the past. Information for current cohorts shows that improvements in girls' progress are more consistent now, particularly in writing.
- Historically pupils made less progress in writing. Careful scrutiny of the data, together with a review of pupils' work, suggests that, although the most-able pupils were stronger in handwriting, punctuation and spelling, they were not as secure in their skills of composition. As a result, these pupils have not made as much progress from their starting points as would be expected. School leaders quite rightly recognise that whatever their starting points pupils should make better progress in writing. The changes the school has made to how writing is taught are having a positive impact on all pupils and helping to eradicate the legacy of underperformance for older pupils.

School details

Unique reference number	112298
Local authority	Cumbria
Inspection number	10012118

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

Type of school	Junior
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	7–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	177
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Jeremy Gilmour
Headteacher	Ms Moira Maughan
Telephone number	01946 695311
Website	www.stjamesjun.cumbria.sch.uk
Email address	admin@stjamesjun.cumbria.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	14–15 January 2014

Information about this school

- St James' is a smaller-than-average-sized primary school.
- The proportion of pupils who come from minority ethnic groups is lower than the national average.
- The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is lower than the national average.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils supported by the pupil premium funding is below the national average. The pupil premium is additional funding for those pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals, and children looked after by the local authority.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs or disability is above the national average.
- The school runs breakfast and after-school clubs which are open to all children every day.
- In 2015 the school met the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 6.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching, including joint observations with the headteacher.
- Discussions were held with senior leaders, members of staff, representatives of the governing body, the former school improvement partner and a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors examined a wide range of documentation, including that relating to safeguarding, behaviour and attendance, school improvement planning, assessment information and reports on the quality of teaching.
- Inspectors spoke to pupils informally during the school day and observed them during playtime and lunch. They also met formally with a group of pupils to talk about their learning, behaviour and safety.
- Inspectors heard a number of pupils read.
- Inspectors took note of displays around the school.
- A range of pupils' books were checked jointly with the headteacher.
- Inspectors spoke to a number of parents and took note of the 33 responses to Parent View.
- Inspectors also took note of the 18 responses they received to the inspection questionnaire for school staff.

Inspection team

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Her Majesty's Inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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