

St Matthew's CofE School

Westnewton, Wigton, Cumbria CA7 3NT

Inspection dates

1–2 November 2016

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- This is a happy school which pupils love to attend. They thoroughly enjoy their learning. Every pupil feels valued, safe and secure.
- Pupils' personal development is excellent. The school creates a wide range of opportunities where pupils can grow in confidence, learn how to work positively with others and develop leadership skills. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is also outstanding.
- At an early stage, pupils are taught how to learn for themselves. Pupils work productively in groups, pairs or individually. They have very positive attitudes to learning and work with enthusiasm.
- Pupils care for one another. They play harmoniously and happily in mixed-age groups. Pupils respect themselves and understand that they are individuals. This helps them understand that others are also different and to offer them respect too. Pupils are confident and polite when talking to adults.
- The headteacher has led the school well, ensuring that pupils move on to secondary school with confidence, as principled young people who are enthusiastic about continuing their education.
- Many aspects of the school have improved since the last inspection. These include the teaching of mathematics and phonics.
- Although pupils' academic development is good, it is not as strong as their personal development.
- Children get off to a good start in Reception. Teachers make an early identification of what children need to learn and individual children are guided well to develop quickly.
- Typically, pupils currently in the school are making good progress in writing, reading and mathematics.
- Wider aspects of the curriculum are taught well and teachers take these opportunities to apply and reinforce pupils' core literacy and numeracy skills.
- Leaders and managers are not clear enough about what each pupil should be expected to achieve. This makes it difficult for teachers to assess how closely pupils are matching their targets. Consequently, occasionally a few pupils do not reach their full potential.
- Governors offer very valuable support to the headteacher and to other staff; however, they are not sufficiently objective and analytical when evaluating the impact of the school's work on pupil achievement.
- The school's website does not comply with statutory requirements.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve procedures deployed by leaders and managers, including governors, to hold teachers and the headteacher to account more rigorously for the progress of pupils by:
 - setting specific and aspirational targets for each pupil and for the school
 - ensuring that teachers accurately assess the progress that pupils make
 - monitoring the progress that pupils make frequently
 - intervening quickly if a pupil's progress slows
 - ensuring that all aspects of the school's work are, where possible, evaluated by using criteria based on pupil achievement.
- Improve the capacity of governors to be more analytical when evaluating the performance of the school.
- Ensure that the school website provides all statutorily required information.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The headteacher and governors have cultivated a school where pupils flourish. Children start Reception with typical levels of development. As they move through the school, pupils develop well, gaining confidence and a wide range of skills. They leave for secondary school well equipped for this next stage, having had a happy and successful primary education.
- The headteacher promotes the school's ethos and values strongly. She is successful in ensuring that pupils develop qualities that will help them become active, valued, productive and responsible members of their future communities.
- The culture of the school combines a sense of industry with happiness.
- Pupils experience a broad curriculum. Lessons are enriched with a wide variety of educational visits. These help some learning to 'come alive' for pupils. In addition, they give pupils an opportunity to learn at first hand about cultures different from their own.
- Friday afternoons are set aside for project and group activities. In mixed-age groups, some children will cook and learn about nutrition while others climb a mountain.
- The combined effect of the rich range of educational experiences and the strong focus on pupils' personal development is that pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is a considerable strength of the school.
- Parents who responded to the opportunity to write comments to the inspector stated clearly and unanimously that they are very happy with the education their children receive. They place great value on the 'family atmosphere' and the wide range of activities and opportunities.
- Leaders and managers have identified that literacy development in boys is slower than in girls. They have taken action to improve boys' reading and writing by introducing boy-friendly topics and books, and using dads and granddads as good male role model readers. Other initiatives encourage the improvement of all pupils in literacy development; these include a subscription to a pupils' newspaper and ensuring that pupils develop literacy skills in a wide range of subjects. These initiatives, although at an early stage, appear to be having a positive effect on current pupils' achievement in reading and writing.
- The school has also introduced a computer-based programme to improve literacy. A recent leadership review of the impact of this system revealed that although there was a positive benefit to pupils, more needs to be done to maximise the potential of the programme, particularly increasing its use at home.
- The progress of disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is monitored. The school uses a wide range of strategies and activities to ensure that these pupils do not fall behind. The school's procedures to monitor the progress of other pupils are not as strong.
- Leaders and managers have not adapted quickly to new systems of assessing pupil progress. As a consequence, leaders and teachers do not have secure knowledge of how well each individual pupil should achieve to fully reach their potential, including the most able pupils. Without secure and ambitious individual targets for pupils, overall school targets for pupil achievement are vague and unambitious.

- The headteacher has developed plans for school improvement based on reviews of the school's current performance. On the whole, these have been appropriate. However, the impact of these developments is evaluated by considering pupils' personal development and too little account is taken of the impact on pupil achievement.
- The school ensures that staff are kept up to date with educational developments through programmes of training which are adaptable to the specific needs of each teacher and the wider needs of the school. The performance management process is conducted efficiently. However, the move away from using specific achievement of pupils as one of the key criteria for success has contributed to a few pupils not progressing quite as well as they could have done.
- The school uses additional funding it receives to support disadvantaged pupils and promote physical education effectively. Money has been well spent to broaden the range of learning resources to improve literacy and numeracy. Additional funding has also enabled pupils to take part in a much broader range of physical activities, including mountain walking and a wide range of team games. Pupils are rightly proud of their sporting achievement, particularly when competing against much larger schools.
- Both the local authority and the church diocese provide the school with 'light touch' support because it is a good school. The school has struggled a little with new aspects of assessing, monitoring pupil progress and setting aspirational targets.

Governance of the school

- The governing body offers good support to the school.
- The governing body is very well led by the chair of governors. The school has undergone considerable restructuring recently, particularly with regard to the size and age range of classes. This complex re-organisation and increased employment of teaching staff has been very well managed. Due to high-quality project management skills and prudent financial management, this development has been achieved successfully and within budget.
- The school is becoming increasingly popular and numbers on roll are rising significantly.
- Governors do not offer strong enough challenge to the headteacher for the progress that pupils make. Collectively, they do not currently have sufficient skills to analyse objectively pupil progress data without interpretation from the headteacher. This has resulted in current weaknesses in the school's monitoring procedures.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- The strong, caring community within the school is the most significant factor in ensuring that pupils are safe. Pupils care for each other and know how to raise any concerns they may have. Pupils will talk confidently to teachers, knowing they will help. Teachers are compassionate and professional. They are well trained to manage safeguarding and child protection.
- The headteacher fully understands how to respond to safeguarding concerns. She has good links with external agencies and works well with them. Records of cases are kept systematically. Appropriate actions are timely.
- Procedures to ensure that only suitable staff are recruited are robust.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Teachers work hard to ensure that pupils enjoy their learning. Teachers know the characteristics of each pupil well. Teachers know what individual pupils will struggle with and how to motivate them. Teachers deploy a wide range of strategies and activities which engage pupils' interests, as well as helping them learn. Teachers know that boys' literacy development is a little behind that of girls and so they are now taking considerable steps to improve boys' engagement in improving their literacy skills.
- Since the last inspection, the teaching of mathematics has been transformed. Pupils have their own 'learning ladder'. This identifies their starting point in a topic and clearly describes the steps they need to take to move up in understanding. Pupils will try an activity for themselves. If they struggle they will discuss it with a learning partner. Only when both struggle with it do they ask the teacher for help. Occasionally the teacher will teach the whole class when they identify a common misunderstanding or a particularly difficult concept.
- This system for teaching mathematics relies heavily on good teacher assessment strategies. These strategies have also improved since the last inspection, and improved across all subjects. Pupils are expected to, and have the time to, respond to comments made by the teacher in their work books. Answers are not given by the teacher, but advice and further challenges are. Pupils say that this 'makes them think more'.
- Teachers encourage the collaborative learning strategies used in mathematics to be used in other subjects so that pupils will happily discuss issues with, and learn from, other pupils across the curriculum. Pupils say they enjoy this way of learning. Their classroom industry confirms this.
- The current lack of clarity that teachers have on individual pupils' targets tends to slow progress a little because occasionally pupils, including the most able pupils, could be pushed further and more quickly than they are.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Outstanding

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding.
- The school creates a wide variety of opportunities to promote pupils' personal development from a young age. Pupils are expected to take responsibility and to develop leadership qualities. Classmates elect pupil leaders to form the school's 'dream team'. This group performs a wide variety of duties. Members take part in evaluating the quality of teaching. Their lesson evaluations show very useful and well-informed feedback to teachers, who adapt what they are doing as a result of this evaluation. Pupils apply to the dream team for 'jobs' that are advertised, and members of the team manage the full recruitment and appointment process. Pupils said they thought it would be a good idea for the school to have chickens. This project was managed exclusively by pupils and now the school has its own flock, looked after by pupils. The next project is to have a school calf.
- There are no barriers in the school and no divisions so pupils work and play in harmony, irrespective of age, gender or background.

- Harmony and respect extend to relationships between pupils and staff. Pupils place considerable trust in adults around the school. This enables adults to deal with occasionally tricky situations very effectively. Adults know pupils very well. Care for pupils is their highest priority.
- Pupil welfare is outstanding because pupils care for each other and adults are passionate about pupils being safe, feeling secure and happy.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding.
- The school places great importance on developing the skills pupils need to learn independently and through discussion with learning partners and groups. Pupils respect and are motivated by this responsibility. When working away from the direct supervision of the teacher they work just as hard as if the teacher was watching them. This happens because pupils are motivated by the work and by their desire to learn.
- Pupils take pride in their work, and this is usually reflected in their written work.
- Pupils move calmly around the school building and during break and lunchtimes have fun playing happily. They are confident when talking to adults and respectful.
- Overall pupil attendance is similar to national figures. However, no pupils are considered to be persistently absent.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- For this small school, annual published information on attainment and progress is statistically unreliable. The number of pupils in each year can be very small. This could lead to large swings in proportions of pupils appearing to be successful or otherwise.
- Over the last four years, 13 pupils have left to move to secondary school. Typically, these pupils made good progress with some year-to-year variability across subjects.
- The teaching of phonics has been improving, resulting in a much larger proportion of pupils meeting the expected standard at the end of Year 1. In 2016, this proportion was similar to the national average. However, there is a legacy of weak phonics understanding affecting reading and writing for older pupils. By the end of key stage 1, pupils have been catching up but it is not until the end of key stage 2 that standards in reading and writing are broadly average. Girls' achievement in reading and writing tends to be stronger than boys' achievement.
- Attainment across both key stages in mathematics has been consistently good.
- For pupils currently in the school, progress in mathematics is good. There is considerable focus on pupils becoming very confident with number work and mental arithmetic. This gives pupils confidence to tackle other aspects of mathematics.
- Pupils progress well in other subjects. Their work demonstrates clearly their enjoyment of learning in a broad range of subjects. Pupils speak enthusiastically about their history work, and visits to Vindolanda and Beamish museum were very popular. Pupils are encouraged to read widely and write extensively during project work. This is helping to develop their literacy skills.
- Numbers of disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are very small. An examination of the level of achievement of these individual pupils shows that they generally make similar progress to that of other pupils nationally, although there are some variations.

- Similarly, numbers of most-able pupils are small. Those currently in the school make good progress.

Early years provision

Good

- The leadership of Reception is good. There is currently a much larger number of children in Reception than in previous years, reflecting the increasing popularity of the school. These children are making good progress.
- The school has very strong and effective links with the neighbouring Nursery provision, with most children moving to this Reception.
- The school is being innovative in using modern technologies to further improve the involvement of parents with the education of their children. With a few taps on a tablet, screen photos or videos of a child's learning can be on their parent's phone. Comments by both parents and teachers can be communicated instantly. Similarly, the school can keep up to date with activities and developments at home. Some parents have adopted this highly effective communication system quickly.
- Teaching is good. Staff take time to help children settle into the Reception Year. Over the first half term, children's levels of development are accurately assessed. Children start Reception with levels of development broadly in line with the national picture. These early teacher assessments are used to set development programmes for each child.
- Communication between adults within Reception is good. All staff have a full understanding of what each child should be working on to help develop quickly. So, when children think they are 'just playing' the teacher or teaching assistant is skilfully developing all aspects of learning including language, concept of number or their fine motor skills.
- Phonics learning is started as soon as possible and children learn well in small groups.
- Children thrive in this vibrant and interesting classroom. The recently extended outdoor space is adequate but space is limited for children to develop their gross motor skills through bike riding, running and jumping. Children are safe and very well looked after.
- An early start is made on developing pupils' personal development and good behaviour. Children learn right from the start of Reception about taking responsibility for their actions and the impact they have on how others feel.

School details

Unique reference number	112308
Local authority	Cumbria
Inspection number	10002877

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	Primary
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	50
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Anita Wilkinson
Headteacher	Carole Satterthwaite
Telephone number	01697 320545
Website	www.stmatthews.cumbria.sch.uk
Email address	admin@stmatthews.cumbria.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	26 June 2012

Information about this school

- St Matthew's is a much smaller than average school. However, recently numbers on roll have increased significantly. This year there has been an alteration to the organisation of classes. During morning sessions pupils are split into four classes. These changes have led to an increase in the employment of teachers and teaching assistants. More girls attend than boys. The number of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is small; nevertheless this represents a broadly similar proportion of the school cohort to that seen nationally. Numbers of pupils who are considered disadvantaged are small.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for attainment and progress in English and mathematics.
- The school website does not meet requirements on: the publication of information about governors; special educational needs and/or disabilities; an analysis of the impact of additional funding for disadvantaged pupils and sport premium; or a link to the school and college performance tables.

Information about this inspection

- During the inspection, meetings were held with the headteacher, teaching staff, a group of pupils and three members of the governing body. I met with a representative of the local authority and a representative of the church diocese.
- Documents were scrutinised, including safeguarding checks, pupil achievement tracking and records of checks on the quality of teaching.
- I considered school evaluations and improvement plans.
- I visited classrooms and spoke to pupils, looked at their books and observed their learning.
- I scrutinised work produced by both current and past pupils and over a range of subjects.
- I listened to pupils read.
- I observed pupils playing at break and lunchtimes.
- I examined child protection information.
- I took account of the 10 responses to the Ofsted online parental questionnaire (Parent View). I also took account of nine online parental comments and one letter. I considered the two online survey responses made by staff.

Inspection team

Neil Mackenzie, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

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