

Victoria Infant and Nursery School

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

Inspection dates

6–7 February 2018

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
Early years provision	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- Pupils thrive in this much-improved school. They become confident and capable learners who are prepared well for the next stage of their education.
- The headteacher provides good leadership, fully supported by the staff and governors. She shows a sheer determination to provide the best possible education for all pupils who attend the school.
- Governors are dedicated and challenge school leaders appropriately to ensure continued improvement.
- Staff are committed to bringing about further improvements and morale is high. There is a strong sense of teamwork across the school.
- Middle leaders are becoming increasingly effective. They have acted to improve teaching and learning particularly in mathematics. However, this work is at an early stage.
- Teaching, learning and assessment are effective over time. Teachers plan effective activities which excite pupils and engage their passion for learning.
- Teaching assistants work alongside teachers to support and nurture pupils. However, the support that teaching assistants provide is variable, as some do not challenge pupils effectively in their learning.
- Across the school, almost all pupils are making good progress and are achieving well. However, pupils do not have sufficient opportunity to develop reasoning and problem-solving in mathematics. At times, teaching does not challenge the least able groups of pupils, particularly in mathematics.
- The overwhelming majority of parents and carers are very positive about all aspects of the school's work.
- Behaviour is good. Pupils are polite, welcoming and love coming to school. They are eager to explain their learning and share their ideas. However, they do not always take pride in presenting their work.
- The curriculum is varied and offers pupils many exciting opportunities to learn. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is strong.
- Children in early years settle quickly due to good partnership working between the school and parents. They make good progress and enjoy their learning. However, the opportunities offered are sometimes insufficiently challenging.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Strengthen leadership and management further by:
 - developing the role of some middle leaders so that they have a greater impact on teaching, learning and assessment.
- Continue to improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment by:
 - developing further consistency in the teaching of mathematics so that all children are challenged, particularly when reasoning and solving problems
 - ensuring that teaching fully challenges the lower-ability pupils so that they achieve the highest possible outcomes, especially in mathematics
 - developing the skills of teaching assistants so that they can fully challenge the pupils that they work with
 - developing consistently high expectations in the presentation of pupils' work.
- Improve the early years further by:
 - developing the indoor learning environment so that it provides richer opportunities for children to learn through imaginative play.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- Pupils, parents, teachers, senior leaders and governors spoke with great enthusiasm about how this school has improved since the last inspection. The headteacher provides strong, sharply focused leadership. She is supported well by senior leaders, a strong staff team and an invigorated governing body.
- Leaders and governors have maintained a secure focus on improving the school's performance. Because of the firm leadership of the headteacher, the quality of teaching has improved and almost all pupils now make good progress across the school. Where progress had been less strong, as indicated by the 2016 assessment results, leaders acted decisively and their actions brought about clear improvements.
- Leaders have clear, ambitious aspirations for the school, and these are understood fully by all staff. Staff have high expectations of their pupils and of themselves and they feel nurtured and supported by the leadership team. This contributes to the friendly and highly caring ethos across the school.
- Leaders and governors work together to ensure that they have a clear understanding of their school and the issues they need to address to improve the school further. Leaders have methodically implemented plans that have been clear, concise and focused on sustaining improvements over time. Their review of plans ensures that leaders and governors know how their work is impacting on learning.
- Senior leaders carry out regular monitoring of the quality of teaching and the standard of work in books. These processes have greatly impacted on standards across the school. Monitoring has helped teachers to improve the quality of teaching and to know how well pupils are progressing.
- Middle leaders are now developing in their roles. They have a clear overview of their areas of responsibility and have undertaken relevant training to help equip them with the skills for their roles. More middle leaders are now influencing the development of teaching and learning across the school. For example, the new mathematics leader has provided training to staff on a new 'mastery' approach, and the literacy leader has conducted monitoring to ensure that pupils have extended writing opportunities across the school. However, this work is in its early stages and is not yet impacting strongly on developing teaching or improving outcomes.
- Leaders have ensured that teachers' performance management has been highly focused on securing improvements. Outcomes are scrutinised and probed closely by the senior leaders and governors, a process which has had a positive effect on pupils' progress. Leaders have acted to improve teaching, identifying when this a strength and supporting staff where there are weaknesses. Teachers reported that feedback from senior leaders, especially through performance management, improves teaching and their practice.
- Careful consideration is given to ensure that the pupil premium funding is spent wisely to break down barriers to learning. The funding is being used well to provide pupils with targeted support academically, emotionally and socially. Leaders have a clear rationale for the allocation of the funds. They recognise that, although the difference

between the attainment of the school's disadvantaged pupils and that of others nationally is diminishing, particularly at key stage 1, more work needs to be done.

- The special educational needs coordinator (SENCo) has a clear understanding of those pupils who require extra support. Interventions are put in place and reviewed on a regular basis so that pupils make progress. The funding for pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities is spent wisely.
- Leaders have created a broad and balanced curriculum, which appeals to pupils' interests and strongly promotes British values. Subjects are taught either discretely or through a topic-based approach. Through assemblies and the curriculum, pupils learn about different faiths and cultures. This helps pupils recognise and understand the diversity of the world in which they live.
- The local authority has given robust support to the school in its recent journey to good. It believes that the headteacher is a 'strong leader'. There has been a strong emphasis on working collaboratively with other schools to provide support and challenge to ensure that outcomes for pupils improve.
- The overwhelming majority of parents are supportive of the work of the school. Most would recommend it to another parent, and they believe that the school is well led and managed. Parents fully recognise and appreciate that there has been 'lots of change for the positive' since the last inspection. Parents shared, 'The school is now full of character,' and, 'I can't praise the headteacher and staff enough.'

Governance of the school

- Governors are enthusiastic and passionate about the school. They visit the school frequently. Governors have a clear understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses, so they know the issues to be tackled.
- Since the previous inspection, governors have undertaken a review of how the governing body works and implemented an action plan to address areas for improvement. The governing body was reorganised, and new governors were recruited based on the skills they could offer. Governors undertake various development programmes to support them to execute their duties effectively and draw on a wide range of services to help them develop further. They attend training, for example, in understanding published data about the school. This provides them with the skills and knowledge to understand pupil outcomes. Consequently, governors now have the skills needed to hold leaders to account effectively.
- Governors work alongside other leaders to gain first-hand knowledge of how the school runs on a day-to-day basis. They receive high-quality information from school leaders, which they use to inform their work. They are not afraid to ask challenging questions or take decisive actions when they have concerns.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Those responsible for safeguarding are trained at the appropriate level. The headteacher understands her responsibility to ensure that there is always someone

with responsibility for safeguarding on the school site to deal with any concerns.

- Safeguarding procedures and policies are in place. Leaders ensure that training is up to date for staff and for members of the governing body. Staff have a good awareness of safeguarding issues and procedures to follow should they be concerned about a pupil's welfare, and are aware of issues relating to the 'Prevent' duty.
- The premises are safe and secure. The identity of visitors to the school is closely checked. The single central record of staff contains all the required detail.
- Almost all parents who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire or in writing stated that their children are safe, and they praised the quality of care provided by the school. Parents described the effective way in which the school has supported their children.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Leaders and staff have created a happy, purposeful environment, which helps pupils to become independent and confident learners. Staff have built positive relationships with pupils that enable pupils to develop self-esteem and resilience. As a result, pupils have eager and positive attitudes towards their learning and enjoy their lessons.
- Pupils are encouraged to discuss their learning and work collaboratively in many lessons. Where teaching is having the most positive impact, teachers display good subject knowledge, and this enables them to question, probe and develop pupils' knowledge and understanding.
- Teaching assistants work alongside teachers to support pupils in their work. They provide a nurturing and caring role in the classroom. However, they do not always utilise their skills effectively and can provide too much support for pupils. Consequently, particularly for less able pupils, progress is slower, as they over-rely on the support provided.
- Leaders and teachers have developed an appropriate assessment system to help guide their work. This underpins learning across the school and helps to ensure that most pupils have work set at challenging and appropriate levels. Leaders routinely use the information to target pupils and provide support where it is needed. However, at times, the least able pupils are given work that does not challenge them sufficiently.
- Reading is a strength of the school. The teaching of phonics is carefully developed in the early years and into key stage 1 and, as a result, most pupils get off to a good start in their reading. Pupils read more fluently and widely. They talked readily about the books they enjoy and offered their opinions about different authors. Many pupils have developed a passion for reading and parents said that their children now read for enjoyment at home. Leaders have identified that wider comprehension is weaker. Inspectors could see evidence of the impact of leaders' strategies to improve pupils' comprehension. For example, pupils in Year 2 were being stretched through probing questioning that deepened their understanding of the texts they were reading.
- Pupils write well because teachers are now skilled at demonstrating and explaining different styles of writing. Pupils write at length and for a wide variety of purposes. Teachers encourage pupils to use ambitious vocabulary to make their writing interesting. Teachers develop pupils' writing skills by enabling them to write in a range of styles by threading writing through the themed topics. This is complemented

through a range of discrete opportunities to learn about grammar, punctuation and spelling.

- Pupils are becoming keen mathematicians. Pupils' work in books is well matched to the curriculum and they engage well when learning mathematics. Pupils have many opportunities to count and calculate. However, opportunities to develop reasoning and problem-solving are not consistently embedded throughout school. Activities for lower-ability pupils are not always pitched at the right level to drive learning forward at a pace and can be too repetitive. As a result, lower-ability pupils are not encouraged to think deeply enough or provided with opportunities to use and apply their mathematical skills.
- By the time pupils enter key stage 1, they are enthusiastic learners and are willing to share and show their learning. However, expectations in presentation are not consistent, and pupils are not taught to take pride in their work. Teachers do not insist strongly enough that pupils' handwriting and the presentation of their work are neat and well organised.
- Parents are kept well informed about their children's progress. They are resounding in their view that the quality of teaching at this school is good and that their children make good progress.
- Teaching has improved significantly since the last inspection, so that it is now typically good. Teachers and leaders spoke of the positive learning culture that is now evident across the school. Teachers are encouraged to undertake a wide variety of training, and there are increasing opportunities to share good practice. Leaders are aware of the need to provide further development for teachers, such as in mathematics, in order to continue to improve the quality of teaching in the school.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils talked happily and confidently about their school. They enjoy taking part in the wide range of activities offered, including art, history and physical education.
- Pupils are taught how to be safe, and said that they feel safe. Pupils spoke about the work they have done on safety, such as in their anti-bullying and e-safety lessons. Health and safety are promoted throughout the curriculum. Inspectors observed Nursery children learning about how to stay safe while playing outside in the snow and ice.
- Pupils said that incidents of bullying almost never happen, but if issues do arise they are confident that they will be dealt with promptly by staff. Pupils are happy to talk to staff about their concerns. Pupils showed a good understanding of the word 'bullying', but were less clear about the different types of bullying that can take place. They spoke confidently about how they are aware that everyone is different. For example, one said, 'We all like to do different things.' They were clear that everyone is given a warm welcome at Victoria Nursery and Infant School.
- The curriculum promotes spiritual, moral, social and cultural education extremely well.

Pupils' understanding of different cultures and faiths beyond their immediate experience is very well developed. For example, inspectors observed a lively and thought-provoking assembly. Pupils' singing filled the room and there was a clear sense of enjoyment. Pupils all joined in the school prayer and quietly reflected at the end on the messages they had heard.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- The strong relationships that are nurtured in school ensure that most pupils conduct themselves well in lessons and around school.
- All pupils are polite and well mannered. They move around the school in an orderly manner. Visitors to the school are made to feel very welcome and cannot fail to be impressed by the warm, friendly and caring atmosphere.
- Playtimes are usually friendly occasions, when pupils play happily together. Pupils in Year 1 talked at length about their friendship groups and the games they enjoy. Pupils told inspectors that playtimes are normally friendly. When arguments do happen, pupils know which adults to approach to help them resolve their differences.
- Leaders have worked hard to improve pupils' attendance and most pupils now attend school regularly. Pupils' attendance is in line with the national average this academic year. The percentage of pupils who are persistently absent from school is falling. Pupils are very clear about the importance of their education.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Outcomes have improved. Throughout the school, pupils make good progress from their starting points. Attainment data in 2017 show that pupils in key stage 1 now attain above the national averages for reading, writing and mathematics at the expected standard and the higher levels. This is particularly the case for most-able pupils in writing and mathematics.
- Leaders are quick to assess pupils, identify their strengths and ensure that robust plans are in place to support those pupils who have gaps in their learning or who fall behind. Leaders ensure that teachers use their assessments to inform pupils' next steps and drive progress forward.
- The teaching of phonics is good. The number of pupils reaching the expected standard in Year 1 has been above the national average for the last three years. Almost all pupils who do not meet the standard in Year 1 catch up by the end of Year 2.
- Current pupils in key stage 1 make good progress. Teachers build carefully on the knowledge, understanding and skills that children gain in the early years. The school's assessment information shows that a good proportion of pupils are working at the expected levels in reading, writing and mathematics, and an increasing number of pupils are working at the higher standards. This was particularly noticeable in Year 1 where many pupils build on their strong progress from the early years foundation stage.

- Children come into early years with skills and knowledge that are significantly below those typical for their age. Children make good progress and achieve well in relation to their very low starting points. The number of children achieving a good level of development is increasing year on year.
- Through careful tracking, targeted teaching and thorough planning of next steps, the school ensures that those pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities make good progress over time and achieve well.
- The school is pleased that the difference between the progress of its disadvantaged pupils and that of others nationally is diminishing at key stage 1. However, the rate of this is currently slower than in early years.
- Outcomes for the least able pupils are strengthening. However, inspectors' scrutiny of school information and of pupils' books showed that work set for these pupils varies in the level of challenge. Pupils are given too few opportunities to apply their learning, particularly in mathematics, which limits progress.

Early years provision

Good

- The leadership and management of early years are good. The early years leader has worked tirelessly to improve this area of the school since the last inspection. She now has a good overview of strengths and priorities for development.
- The quality of teaching is strong. Staff have an accurate view of the progress that children are making and plan well for their next steps in learning. Adult-led activities are challenging and focused on developing children's next steps. Routines have been established very quickly and high expectations have been set.
- Staff know their children extremely well and have forged strong relationships with all children. Leaders and staff make incisive evaluations of what is working well and what is not. Where specific goals and targets are not being achieved, they quickly plan and provide extra activities to address this. Consequently, children make rapid and sustained progress from their starting points.
- The foundations for learning are firmly established throughout Nursery and Reception. There is a calm environment where children are taught to play together, such as through careful modelling and demonstration by well-skilled adults. Children display good levels of concentration. For example, inspectors observed children learning a new letter sound in Nursery and joining in rhymes to help them remember the sound, before engaging in a further sustained activity in the outdoor area.
- Learning in the early years is fun. Children are happy, confident and busy. Activities cover all areas of learning and take account of children's interests. Staff promote outdoor learning well. Indoors, children have a large amount of space to move around freely, and they learn and play in comfort. Independent play areas are set out. However, the activities provided do not always challenge children or drive their learning forward at a pace.
- Leaders are highly focused on removing barriers to learning. They form strong relationships with parents and this ensures that parental involvement is high. Staff set practical, focused homework to ensure that learning at home and learning at school

are linked. Staff set next steps for pupils' learning and share these effectively with home.

- Children feel safe and the standards of behaviour observed were impeccable.
- At the time of the inspection, there were no breaches to the welfare requirements.

School details

Unique reference number	112210
Local authority	Cumbria
Inspection number	10042438

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

Type of school	Infant
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3 to 7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	231
Appropriate authority	Local authority
Chair	Lee Roberts
Headteacher/Principal/Teacher in charge	Lucie Phelps
Telephone number	01229 812537
Website	www.victoriainfantsbarrow.co.uk
Email address	head@vicinf.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	8–9 March 2016

Information about this school

- This is a smaller than average-sized school.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils is below the national average.
- The majority of pupils are of White British heritage.
- The proportion of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is significantly below the average.
- The proportion of pupils who have a statement of special educational needs or an education, health and care plan is in line with the national average.
- The school manages breakfast and after-school clubs.
- Since the last inspection, a new chair of governors has been appointed.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching and learning in a wide range of lessons, covering all classes in the school. The headteacher accompanied the lead inspector on some observations.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, assistant headteacher and other leaders from across the school.
- The lead inspector also met the chair of the governing body and other governors.
- The lead inspector spoke to the school improvement partner.
- Inspectors talked to a group of pupils on the first day of the inspection. The inspection team also talked to pupils about their learning in lessons and at breaktime.
- Inspectors observed the after-school club.
- Inspectors talked to parents as they dropped their children off at school. Pupils' behaviour was observed during lessons, lunchtimes and playtimes.
- Inspectors examined extensively the quality of work in a wide range of books. They discussed pupils' work and their learning with them in lessons.
- Inspectors looked at the school's work and considered documents, including the school's self-evaluation, the school improvement plan, curriculum plans and information relating to pupils' achievement and safeguarding.
- Inspectors took into account 21 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, and 16 free-text responses.

Inspection team

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Ofsted Inspector

Claire Hollister

Ofsted Inspector

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