

Victoria Junior School

Victoria Road, Workington, Cumbria CA14 2RE

Inspection dates

11–12 October 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	Requires improvement
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- Leaders have taken decisive steps to address the alarmingly low standards seen in 2016. Their decisive actions have ensured that outcomes in mathematics and, in particular, writing are improving strongly.
- Despite considerable improvement from the low outcomes seen in 2016, outcomes overall still require improvement. The strong improvements made in writing and mathematics are less evident in end of key stage reading results. Unvalidated data for 2018 shows that Year 6 pupils' attainment and progress in reading were still below that of other pupils nationally.
- Outcomes for disadvantaged pupils are improving because leaders use the pupil premium funding effectively. Their progress is improving year-on-year towards that of other pupils nationally, particularly in writing and mathematics.
- As a result of the improvements that leaders have made, teaching is effective in enabling pupils to learn well.
- On a few occasions, teaching does not provide enough challenge for the most able pupils, or fully meet the needs of pupils in Year 3 who need to catch up. This means that some of these pupils do not make the progress of which they are capable.
- Leaders and governors have developed an exciting curriculum that provides pupils with a wide range of experiences in school and in the wider area. Work in pupils' topic books shows that they practise their reading, writing and mathematical skills across a range of subjects.
- Leaders ensure that pupils are well prepared for life in modern Britain. For example, they promote pupils' awareness of equalities and they ensure that the curriculum challenges stereotypes. Pupils develop well socially, morally, culturally and spiritually. Their teachers help them to understand and value difference and diversity. Pupils develop a sense of citizenship and learn to take responsibility in preparation for the next stage in their education.
- Pupils conduct themselves well around school. Attendance is improving rapidly, including that of disadvantaged pupils. This is because of the determined actions that leaders have taken. However, it is still slightly below average, especially for disadvantaged boys.
- Leaders and governors have established a very strong culture of safeguarding in which pupils' welfare is prioritised. Pupils say they feel safe in school.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve outcomes for all pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, by:
 - ensuring that initiatives to improve standards in reading have a similarly positive effect as those implemented in writing and mathematics
 - ensuring that teachers consistently provide the right amount of challenge for all pupils, and particularly for the most able
 - more quickly identifying and addressing the specific needs of those pupils in Year 3 who need to catch up quickly.
- Continue to improve attendance, especially for disadvantaged boys, so that it is consistently in line with or better than national averages.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- Leaders were galvanised into action by the low standards of attainment and progress seen in the key stage 2 assessments in 2016. Outcomes in reading, writing and mathematics were well below average in all three areas. Under the previous assessment arrangements, pupils' outcomes had been typically in line with other schools nationally. Leaders recognised that pupils were not sufficiently well prepared for the higher expectations of the revised curriculum, and that too much teaching was failing to move pupils' learning along strongly enough.
- The actions that leaders have taken since that point have had a very positive impact on pupils' outcomes, particularly in mathematics, writing and grammar, punctuation and spelling. Senior leaders, and subject leaders responsible for mathematics and English, have not shied away from taking difficult decisions. The school's approach to teaching reading, writing and mathematics has been completely overhauled, to good effect, while any weaknesses in teaching have been determinedly challenged.
- Leaders used their accurate views of the challenges facing the school to identify where changes were needed. For example, they recognised that they needed to improve teachers' understanding of standards in different subjects. Teachers agree that their expectations are now higher as a result.
- Leadership of mathematics and English is effective. The mathematics leader has used his specialist knowledge to change and update the school's approach to teaching mathematics, ensuring that pupils develop mathematical fluency and then learn to use their mathematical skills practically. The English leader has been particularly successful in addressing previous weaknesses in pupils' spelling, punctuation and grammar, and this work is also having a positive effect on the overall quality of pupils' writing.
- Effective leadership of provision for pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities enables pupils to make strong progress from widely varying starting points. Pupils are well supported in class and through a range of interventions. Where further advice and support is needed, leaders make appropriate referrals in a timely manner.
- The curriculum that leaders and governors provide offers pupils an exciting range of activities and experiences that help them to learn across different subjects. For example, during the inspection, some pupils visited a historic castle. Upon their return to school, they practised important writing skills as they described the lives of the people who lived in the castle in the past. Pupils also say they enjoy having the chance to take part in residential visits and musical events, often performing in public. The curriculum thus helps pupils to develop socially, morally, culturally and spiritually.
- The additional funding for physical education (PE) and sport is well spent. The school uses a range of specialist teachers and coaches to run sporting activities during the school day and after school, and many pupils get the opportunity to represent their school in sporting competitions.
- Leaders and governors have a very strong understanding of the high levels of social and economic deprivation in their community. They have established strong systems to

support pupils' welfare in and out of school and to increase their readiness to learn, including establishing breakfast and homework clubs.

- Leaders and governors use the pupil premium funding effectively to ensure that disadvantaged pupils are well supported in school. For example, funding is used to pay for specific teaching activities to enable pupils to catch up. As a result, the progress of disadvantaged pupils is improving year-on-year towards that of other pupils nationally, particularly in writing and mathematics. Attendance of disadvantaged pupils is also improving towards that of other pupils nationally and in the school.
- Leaders ensure that pupils are well prepared for life in modern Britain. They promote pupils' awareness of equalities and they ensure that the curriculum challenges stereotypes. For example, pupils learn about the suffragette movement, and see images around the school of women undertaking a range of working roles.

Governance of the school

- Governors share leaders' determination to improve outcomes for pupils at the school. They have a strong understanding of the needs of the local community and are committed to fostering good working relationships with parents and carers.
- Minutes from their meetings show that governors ask leaders challenging questions about the decisions they make. For example, governors who carried out a recent visit to the school asked leaders to explain the impact of particular decisions about staff deployment on pupils' behaviour.
- Governors hold leaders to account for their use of the pupil premium funding. They have good grasp of pupils' outcomes because they ask for the right information from leaders.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Leaders ensure that rigorous pre-employment checks are carried out and detailed records of these are maintained.
- Leaders and governors have established robust systems for keeping pupils safe from harm. Teachers are vigilant and know how to recognise signs of abuse.
- The designated safeguarding lead works tirelessly to make sure that concerns are properly recorded and that communications with other agencies are very effective. Staff speak of her work in the highest terms.
- Pupils say they feel safe in school. They understand how to keep themselves safe online and know who to speak to if they are worried.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- As a result of the initiatives that leaders have introduced, teaching across the school is now effective in moving pupils' learning forward and raising standards of attainment. Staff value the training and support that leaders make available to them. They say that this has improved their practice.

- Teachers' strong subject knowledge enables them to plan lessons in writing and English grammar, punctuation and spelling that build on what pupils already know and can do. Pupils consolidate their learning before moving on to the next step and as a result their learning is secure. This is reflected in the work in their books.
- Teachers consistently follow the school's updated approach to teaching mathematics. The mathematical knowledge of most teachers is good because of the training that leaders have provided. This enables them to plan learning that pupils find interesting and makes them think more deeply. They help pupils to recall their prior learning in order to understand something new, or to address a misconception. For example, pupils in a Year 5 mathematics lesson who were grappling with new learning about six-figure numbers made progress when their teacher prompted them to remember earlier work with smaller numbers.
- The teaching of reading has also improved over time, although the impact of these improvements has not been as clearly reflected in published data. Teachers plan learning activities which enable current pupils to make good progress in reading and in comprehension. Teachers make careful choices about the texts they use in lessons, based on what they know will interest pupils and introduce them to new vocabulary. Pupils read widely and those who read to inspectors did so with fluency and enthusiasm. Pupils currently in Year 6 are developing important skills in readiness for secondary school.
- Teachers make sure that pupils have plenty of opportunities to develop their important reading, writing and mathematical skills across other curriculum subjects. For example, pupils are challenged to plan and calculate the costs of a forthcoming trip to Manchester, using information such as timetables and ticket prices. At the same time, they write about what they have learned about the city. This is helping pupils to make progress in a range of subjects.
- Pupils settle quickly to work in lessons because teachers set clear expectations for their behaviour. Very little time is lost, because teachers make learning interesting and pupils stay focused. Support staff provide valuable support. They have a clear understanding of the purpose of lessons and activities because teachers make sure they have the information they need.
- The training that leaders have provided has raised teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve. Teachers value this training. They agree that this has helped them plan more effectively to meet the needs of the range of pupils in their classes, and that pupils are making stronger progress as a result. However, the work that teachers plan does not consistently challenge the most able pupils sufficiently and when this happens, they make less progress than they are capable of. Similarly, some pupils in Year 3 get off to a relatively slow start while teachers adjust the level of work that they are given.
- Pupils are typically positive about their learning. They particularly enjoy reviewing their own learning, for example reading comprehension activities, using tablet computers that the school provides. They are proud when they 'get it right'. They also receive homework in line with the school's policy. Pupils' reading records show that parents share in their learning, and value the progress that their children are making.
- Teachers challenge stereotypes and promote equality of opportunity and diversity. For example, they routinely teach pupils about differences in families. They ensure that the

images they display around school draw attention to diversity, for example in relation to culture and belief, and the various working roles of men and women.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils are confident and self-assured in school, because the relationships they have with their teachers are secure. They are proud of their school and of their achievements.
- Pupils develop a sense of responsibility through the activities that leaders provide. For example, some pupils help to look after the school's library. Others serve as members of the school council.
- Pupils have opportunities to develop citizenship through initiatives such as the 'mini-police'. They undertake special training from the local police force and wear their uniforms with pride. They then take part in activities in and out of school that help to reinforce their understanding of responsible behaviour and the rule of law.
- Pupils develop a sense of self-esteem and of their own capabilities through the wide range of sporting, artistic and creative activities that leaders provide. They are keen to celebrate each other's achievements, for example by watching their friends perform in dance productions.
- Leaders have created a culture in which pupils feel and are safe. Pupils understand how to keep themselves safe, for example from different types of bullying and when they are working online. They know who to approach if they are concerned for their own welfare and that of others. During the inspection, pupils were keen to make sure that inspectors too knew how to stay safe.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Teachers who have worked at the school for some time are unanimous in their view that pupils' behaviour has improved significantly over time. They apply the school's behaviour policy consistently and as a result, pupils conduct themselves extremely well.
- Pupils are respectful to each other. They listen to each other's ideas and provide each other with encouragement. For example, pupils in a poetry-writing lesson in Year 3 showed admiration for their friends' similes, such as 'as orange as an apricot'. When the occasion demands, they are not afraid to remind each other of behaviour expectations.
- Pupils show consistently good attitudes to their learning in lessons. They chat quietly to each other in their lessons, to compare answers and consult each other's views. They are almost always attentive, and instances of low-level disruption are rare.
- Leaders have taken effective action to improve attendance. Fewer pupils are now absent persistently, and overall rates of attendance are now improving towards those

of other pupils nationally. The attendance of disadvantaged pupils has also improved but is still below that of other pupils both nationally and in school. This is particularly the case for disadvantaged boys.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- After the low standards evident in 2016, outcomes have begun to climb back to their previous position when compared with other schools nationally. The unvalidated data for outcomes at the end of key stage 2 shows some areas of clear improvement, but progress is still not consistently strong enough in all subjects.
- In writing, pupils' progress and the proportion of pupils reaching the expected level were both in line with other pupils nationally in 2017. This represented an improvement from the previous year. Provisional results indicate that the proportion of pupils reaching the expected level in the 2018 English grammar, punctuation and spelling tests was much higher than the previous year and is now in line with the national average from 2017, while the proportion reaching the higher standard was above that level.
- Provisional results indicate that the progress made in 2018 by pupils in mathematics was also improved from 2017, while the proportion attaining the expected standard in mathematics has more than doubled since 2016. While these figures are still below average when compared with the attainment and progress of pupils nationally in 2017, they signify that standards in mathematics are rising strongly.
- The improvements seen in mathematics and writing are less evident in the published data for reading. Although provisional data for 2018 indicates that standards of attainment and progress are both better than in 2016, they are still well below the 2017 national average levels. However, the actions that leaders have taken to improve reading are having an impact. Pupils are developing a love of reading and are passionate about their favourite books. Pupils who read to inspectors did so confidently and fluently. They show a good understanding of vocabulary and of the meaning of the words and text that they read. As a result, they are now making strong progress.
- Information from the school's assessments, backed up by pupils' work, shows that outcomes are now improving strongly for the majority of current pupils across all year groups in reading, writing and mathematics. This is the result of the decisive actions that leaders have taken to improve the situation. More pupils currently in Year 6 than in previous years are on track to reach at least the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics and so are better prepared for when they move to secondary school.
- Although most-able pupils performed strongly in the grammar, punctuation and spelling assessments in 2018, it is more typically the case in school that a below-average proportion of pupils reach the higher standard in reading and mathematics or achieve greater depth in writing. This is the case both for disadvantaged pupils and their classmates. The school's assessment information and work in current pupils' books indicates that the picture is improving, but that more needs to be done to ensure that most-able pupils are suitably stretched by their work.

- The difference between outcomes for disadvantaged pupils and other pupils nationally is diminishing. In reading, writing and mathematics the proportion of disadvantaged pupils attaining at the expected level at the end of key stage 2 has risen sharply since 2016. Inspection evidence showed that this positive trend is continuing for disadvantaged pupils currently at the school.
- Some pupils in Year 3 have gaps in their knowledge remaining from key stage 1 that are not evident from prior assessment, especially in writing. Sometimes this means that the work that teachers plan for them initially does not accurately meet their needs. Although the work of current pupils shows that their progress is improving, this remains an area for further development.

School details

Unique reference number	112145
Local authority	Cumbria
Inspection number	10042472

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

Type of school	Junior
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	7 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	287
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Andrew Foley
Executive Headteacher	Pauline Robertson
Telephone number	01900 606 053
Website	www.victoriajunior.cumbria.sch.uk
Email address	head@victoriajunior.cumbria.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	4–5 February 2014

Information about this school

- This is a junior school of similar size to an average primary school.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils is well-above average.
- The large majority of pupils are White British.
- The proportion of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is above average.
- The proportion of pupils with an education, health and care plan is above average.
- The executive headteacher is also headteacher of a local community infant school. Most pupils at Victoria Junior School attend this infant school prior to transferring to key stage 2. The executive headteacher is also a national leader of education.
- Three members of staff are specialist leaders of education. All contribute to the professional development of teachers in other local schools and to the training of student teachers.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed learning in lessons.
- Meetings were held with senior and subject leaders, school staff and governors. The lead inspector also spoke with a representative from the local authority.
- Inspectors spoke informally with pupils in lessons, during breaks and at lunchtimes.
- Inspectors also spoke formally with groups of pupils, and with some parents.
- Inspectors scrutinised pupils' work during lessons and work produced over time in a range of their books.
- They also listened to a selection of pupils reading.
- Inspectors observed the work of the school and looked at the latest school performance information showing the current pupils' progress.
- Other documentation scrutinised included plans for school improvement, safeguarding information, behaviour logs, attendance records and minutes of governing body meetings.
- Inspectors took account of seven responses from parents to the Ofsted online questionnaire, Parent View.
- They also took account of 24 responses to Ofsted's staff questionnaire.

Inspection team

Mavis Smith, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Lisa Crausby	Ofsted Inspector
Timothy Gartside	Ofsted Inspector

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In the report, 'disadvantaged pupils' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route. www.gov.uk/pupil-premium-information-for-schools-and-alternative-provision-settings.

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