

Inspection of Victoria Academy

Devonshire Road, Barrow-in-Furness, Cumbria LA14 5NE

Inspection dates: 28 and 29 February 2024

Overall effectiveness	Outstanding
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The quality of education	Outstanding
Behaviour and attitudes	Outstanding
Personal development	Outstanding
Leadership and management	Outstanding
Previous inspection grade	Good

The headteacher of this school is Janine Pierce. This school is part of Furness Education Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer (CEO), Simon Laheney, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Adam Hearnden. The headteacher is also an executive headteacher, who is responsible for this school and one other.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils at this school are successful, resilient, creative and happy. They rise to the school's very high expectations of academic achievement, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Pupils benefit from a very strong climate for learning. They excel in the many rich learning activities that the school provides for them across all subjects.

Pupils successfully strive to meet the school's high expectations of behaviour. This begins from the moment they join Year 3. They learn the importance of respect and courtesy. They manage their own behaviour exceptionally well and encourage everyone around them to do the same. This means that the school is a calm, happy and harmonious place, where pupils feel safe.

Pupils are immensely proud of their school and enjoy attending. Relationships are strongly positive. Pupils value the expert support and encouragement that they receive from staff. They know that staff listen to their concerns or worries.

Pupils flourish in the wide range of opportunities that are available. Staff ensure that all pupils can participate in, and make the most of, the wide array of clubs and activities that the school organises for them. These include golf, construction, netball and choir.

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

The school has meticulously designed an impressive curriculum. The knowledge and skills that pupils will learn are crystal clear. This means that pupils, including those with SEND, develop a strong and rich body of subject knowledge. Pupils achieve exceptionally well in all subjects.

The school, including governors and trustees, ensures that staff have access to high-quality training and support. As a result, staff have very strong subject knowledge. They are extremely well equipped to design learning activities that allow pupils to thrive and learn the curriculum.

Across the school, staff check with precision how well pupils are doing and address any misconceptions swiftly and effectively. They skilfully use assessment information to adapt the delivery of the curriculum and shape future learning.

The school has worked exceptionally hard to address any gaps in pupils' knowledge that occurred as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. Results in national tests in 2023 for mathematics still reflected these gaps. However, since then, the turnaround has been extraordinary. Current pupils are achieving very well.

The school has successfully put reading at the heart of everything it does. Staff make sure that they know exactly how well pupils can read. Pupils read books that match their ability. Staff quickly identify those who fall behind and provide expert support to help them to catch up quickly. As a result, the vast majority of pupils are fluent and confident readers.

The school identifies the additional needs of pupils with SEND quickly and accurately. Staff give these pupils extremely well-designed support. They know exactly what to do to make appropriate adaptations to the curriculum so that these pupils can learn successfully alongside their peers.

Pupils' behaviour is exemplary. They have remarkably high levels of respect for each other. They go above and beyond to support their classmates. Pupils are very clear about what the school expects of them. They rarely have to be reminded how to behave. They do not disturb lessons.

Pupils' personal development is exceptional. Pupils, including those with SEND, enjoy an enormous range of high-quality activities to develop their interests and talents. The school consistently promotes the well-being of pupils. Pupils can attend well-being club to discuss worries, relationships or friendship issues. Older pupils readily take on a range of leadership roles. These include school councillors, sports leaders and librarians.

Trustees have an effective oversight of the school's work. They provide appropriate support and challenge to the school. Trustees delegate much of their responsibilities to the local governing body, who hold the school to account to ensure that systems are working as intended.

The school ensures that staff are well supported to manage their workload and well-being. There is a culture of high expectation, trust and support in the school.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use information from Ofsted Parent View when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

In the report, 'disadvantaged pupils' is used to mean pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND); pupils who meet the [definition of children in need of help and protection](#); pupils receiving statutory local authority support from a social worker; and pupils who otherwise meet the criteria used for deciding the school's [pupil premium funding](#) (this includes pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years, looked after children (children in local authority care) and/or children who left care through adoption or another formal route).

School details

Unique reference number	142247
Local authority	Westmorland and Furness
Inspection number	10286282
Type of school	Junior
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	7 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	203
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Adam Hearnden
CEO of the trust	Simon Laheney
Headteacher	Janine Pierce
Website	www.victoria-academy.co.uk
Dates of previous inspection	25 April 2018, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school is part of the Furness Education Trust.
- The local governing body provides childcare in the form of breakfast and after-school clubs.
- The school does not use any alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspectors: reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.
- Inspectors conducted deep dives into these subjects: reading, mathematics and history. For each deep dive, they discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. They listened to pupils read to a familiar adult.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher and members of the senior leadership team. They also met with subject leaders and a group of teachers.
- An inspector met with members of the local governing body, the chair of the trust board and the CEO of the academy trust.
- Inspectors spoke with pupils in meetings and in and around the school about their experiences of school.
- Inspectors considered responses to Ofsted Parent View, the staff questionnaire and the pupil questionnaire.

Inspection team

Emma Jackson, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Cleo Cunningham

Ofsted Inspector

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