



Victoria Junior School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 112145
LEA Cumbria
Inspection number 278862
Inspection dates 30 November 2005 to 1 December 2005
Reporting inspector Mr Martin Bradley

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

Type of school	Junior	School address	Victoria Road
School category	Community		Workington
Age range of pupils	7 to 11		Cumbria, CA14 2RE
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01900 325242
Number on roll	302	Fax number	01900 325243
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mr Herbert Horsley
Date of previous inspection	1 October 2000	Headteacher	Mr Barry Dickinson

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two of Her Majesty's Inspectors of Schools and two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Victoria Junior School serves an area of mixed terrace housing in the centre of a small coastal town. In January 2001 new premises were opened, replacing a Victorian school on the same site. At the same time, the catchment area was extended: it includes significantly deprived parts of the town. The school receives children from two infant schools and the pupils are almost all of white British background. One third of pupils have declared medical conditions and 41% have identified learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

During the headteacher's overseas leave, the deputy headteacher was acting head for one term, followed by a temporary headteacher appointed from Easter 2005, on secondment from another school. In February 2005 the local authority conducted a school review at the school's request. This led to the intervention of the Intensifying Support Programme (ISP) from June 2005.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

The inspectors judge the school's effectiveness to be satisfactory. This accords generally with the school's view, although teaching and the curriculum were considered by the school to be good and by the inspectors to be satisfactory.

Value for money is now satisfactory, although the school should ensure that its financial budget is fully matched to the priorities of the School Improvement Plan.

Recent reviews have begun to strengthen the school's self-assessment and monitoring. The introduction of targets has focused teachers' planning to a greater extent than previously. It is intended to develop more individual target setting.

Pupils enjoy their time in school and feel safe and well cared for.

There remain significant areas for improvement. Monitoring of planning and assessment, linked to pupils' targets, still requires more rigour and supervision from the top management level. Teaching often lacks the variety and challenge of the best lessons and this good practice is not yet sufficiently shared across all staff.

The governance of the school has shown significant improvement in the last year and the school now has a satisfactory capacity to improve.

What the school should do to improve further

- Continue to develop school and lesson planning based on setting challenging targets for individual pupils.
- Monitor more rigorously teachers' planning and use of assessment to meet individual pupils' needs.
- Review teaching styles so that the best practice is used in all classes.
- Ensure that financial and improvement planning are more closely matched.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Overall, achievement is satisfactory. After some years when standards at the end of Key Stage 2 were significantly below national expectations, they rose in 2005. In English they are similar to national expectations and in mathematics and science they are slightly above these expectations. There are only limited differences between the achievement of boys and girls. There was a significant increase in pupils achieving Level 5 or above in mathematics and science in 2005. In English the increase was less.

The school's current targets for the next two years indicate that these improvements are unlikely to be sustained as the targets in English are below both national expectations and the 2005 levels of achievement. In mathematics they are set to rise slightly in 2006 and then fall back in 2007. In mathematics the percentage of pupils expected to attain higher levels falls significantly in 2006 and 2007. However all of these are much higher than the very low targets set in previous years. The school has

recently begun to set termly targets for each class: this is a useful development which it intends to refine by setting targets for individual pupils.

Key Stage 1 SATs indicate that attainment on entry is broadly similar to national averages. The school's own assessments on entry show lower levels of attainment, and these were confirmed by a survey of eight local schools in 2004. The majority of pupils make satisfactory progress in relation to their starting point, including those with additional learning needs and/or disabilities.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

Personal development and well-being are satisfactory. The majority of children are courteous, respectful and happy in school. Attendance is satisfactory. Evidence from children and parents indicates clearly that lessons are enjoyed and that the wide range of activities the school offers are appreciated. Behaviour is satisfactory overall: when pupils are interested in their work, it is good. At other times, especially amongst a minority of older boys, disruptive behaviour, often at a minor level, distracts pupils who wish to work. Special arrangements are employed in Year 6 so that challenging children do not interrupt the learning of their peers. Unfortunately, these arrangements also lead to the academic expectations for these children being lowered.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory. Assemblies and circle time provide adequate opportunities for children to reflect on a range of issues. Children know and understand what is right and wrong and they work well together when asked to do so. Cultural development is strongest in relation to the locality, but there are some sound opportunities to have insights into the lives of people from other cultures. Art, music and dance all provide satisfactory experiences.

By the time the children leave the school most have satisfactory academic skills. Their knowledge and understanding of carrying responsibility are promoted well by their activities as helpers, monitors around the school and school councillors. Children have a sound appreciation of the need to be healthy and safe and to safeguard the rights of others in these respects. They are prepared satisfactorily for their future economic well-being such as when running the school fruit scheme.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

The inspectors consider that teaching is satisfactory overall, rather than good as in the school's view. This is due to a significant proportion of lessons having weak elements despite being satisfactory overall. Too many lessons had lengthy sections where teachers talked, often about abstract ideas which did not grasp the pupils' imagination or focus their concentration. Pupils worked well when tasks were set, although when the whole class were given the same task it did not match the different levels of attainment. In a minority of lessons, a variety of tasks was well matched to

the range of pupils' abilities and achievement was significantly higher. These lessons reflected the teacher's good skills and subject knowledge.

Although the majority of pupils make satisfactory progress, the school does not always hold sufficiently high expectations especially of higher ability pupils. This term the school began to set termly targets for each class. Whilst this is a good development, it does not yet match the targets to individual pupils' needs or have frequent reviews to inform teachers' planning. Assessment has been reviewed with the whole school policy being implemented, but too often it does not provide information to assist planning.

When teaching assistants are used effectively, their skills of supporting learning are good, ensuring that pupils concentrate well. Too often, however, they are not actively involved in pupils' learning.

Parents support the school, but they are not regularly involved in their children's learning. Meetings are held at the start and end of the school year, but targets are not yet shared with parents.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum is satisfactory, although the school evaluated it as good. The school has begun to monitor its use of the national primary strategy teaching materials to support planning and learning. English and mathematics are adequately covered, although teaching time is lost at the start and end of lessons when the timetable is not fully adhered to. Following the recent move into new premises, information and communication technology (ICT) is well resourced and used effectively. In particular teachers use the recently introduced interactive whiteboards confidently and effectively.

In the best lessons the curriculum is well matched to the range of pupils' capabilities, but this is not consistent throughout the school. In too many classes tasks are undemanding, mundane and do not extend pupils' learning.

The school offers a range of additional activities, mainly for older pupils, including a residential visit to Holland which Year 5 and 6 pupils can join. There is a strong musical tradition of choral singing and with good opportunities for children to learn keyboard skills as well as guitars and recorders.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

The school takes satisfactory care of its pupils. Child protection procedures are established, although not all staff have been trained for this. Vulnerable children are discreetly identified and well supported. Risk assessments demonstrate the school's commitment to pupils' safety and this is reflected in their planning. Guidance and support to help children improve their work are given, but weaknesses in assessing and analysing their progress limit the effectiveness of the help provided. This reflects

the limitations of the current system of whole class target setting, despite recent improvements.

Pupils enjoy school and show consideration for others: some are playground monitors and 'buddies'. Those with additional learning needs and/or disabilities are well cared for and thoughtfully helped by other children. All pupils say they feel safe and are well supported by trusting relationships with adults. Parents also expressed their appreciation of the care, guidance and support provided by the school.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Leadership and management are satisfactory overall, with several areas which are currently being addressed for improvement. These actions have begun to focus the school's development and self-evaluation upon raising standards, reviewing management organisation and establishing targets for pupils' learning. They are positive improvements which have begun to have an impact. Besides adopting class targets, planning has been brought much more into a common format, with links between short and medium term planning being evident in most classes. The enhanced role of all staff, especially the senior management team, in planning for the school's development and analysing data is further evidence of improvement.

In the recent past, extremely high amounts of funding were carried over from one year to the next. These sums have been significantly reduced in the present year. However, the budget planning for the present financial year is not fully matched to the current curriculum or to the development plan for the current school year. The improved organisation of leadership and management requires further rigour if its impact upon standards and the progress of learners is to be maintained and extended. The headteacher and deputy are not sufficiently involved in monitoring planning and target setting, this being the role of year group leaders.

Resources are used satisfactorily, but in some key budget areas such as mathematics and science little has been spent in developing resources during the current year. The school provides satisfactory value for money, but should link its budget more closely to development planning priorities.

The governing body has become much more involved in key decisions and now receives good information about the school's performance. Governors appreciate their increased role and have an improved capacity to act as a critical friend to the school. Parents are generally supportive of the school and appreciative of the developments over the past year. The school runs smoothly on a day to day basis. With the continued support of the local authority the leadership and management now show a satisfactory capacity to improve.

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Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	School Overall	16-19
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	3	NA
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	3	NA
The quality and standards in foundation stage	NA	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3	NA
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	Yes	NA
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	NA

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3	NA
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3	NA
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3	NA
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	3	NA

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	3	NA
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3	NA
The behaviour of learners	3	NA
The attendance of learners	3	NA
How well learners enjoy their education	2	NA
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	3	NA
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	3	NA
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	3	NA
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3	NA

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	3	NA
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3	NA
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	3	NA

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	3	NA
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3	NA
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	3	NA
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3	NA
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	3	NA
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3	NA
The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected	Yes	NA

The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy	
Learners are encouraged and enabled to eat and drink healthily	Yes
Learners are encouraged and enabled to take regular exercise	Yes
Learners are discouraged from smoking and substance abuse	Yes
Learners are educated about sexual health	Yes
The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe	
Procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements	Yes
Risk assessment procedures and related staff training are in place	Yes
Action is taken to reduce anti-social behaviour, such as bullying and racism	Yes
Learners are taught about key risks and how to deal with them	Yes
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution	
Learners are helped to develop stable, positive relationships	Yes
Learners, individually and collectively, participate in making decisions that affect them	Yes
Learners are encouraged to initiate, participate in and manage activities in school and the wider community	Yes
The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being	
There is provision to promote learners' basic skills	Yes
Learners have opportunities to develop enterprise skills and work in teams	Yes
Careers education and guidance is provided to all learners in key stage 3 and 4 and the sixth form	NA
Education for all learners aged 14–19 provides an understanding of employment and the economy	NA

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

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Victoria Junior School
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2 December 2005

Dear Children

Thank you for the welcome you gave us when we visited your school recently. We really appreciated the help you gave us and especially in sharing your work and ideas about the school.

We thought that you get on well with each other and liked the ways you help each other around the school and in the playground. The school clubs and activities, as well as the trip to Holland are good extra opportunities and show how hard the teachers and other staff work for you. We were pleased to hear how you enjoy school.

We thought that your school has improved in many ways recently, although there are still several things to be done. The targets classes are given are useful and it will be even more helpful when you are given your own targets to work to. We have also asked the school to make sure that the best ways teachers organise and plan your work are used in all classes, so that everyone is able to work hard at things that challenge them.

Yours sincerely

Martin Bradley

Her Majesty's Inspector