

Victoria Infant School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	112144
Local Authority	Cumbria
Inspection number	289185
Inspection date	26 June 2007
Reporting inspector	David Earley

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	3–7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	253
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Bill Chicken
Headteacher	Mrs Pauline Robertson
Date of previous school inspection	1 March 2003
School address	Victoria Infant School Islay Place Workington Cumbria CA14 3XB
Telephone number	01900 325250
Fax number	01900 325259

Age group	3–7
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

This is a larger than average sized school near the centre of Workington. It serves an area with high levels of social and economic deprivation. An above average proportion of pupils is eligible for free school meals. Most pupils are of White British origin and a small number of pupils learn English as an additional language. There is an above average proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Most children start in the Nursery (Foundation Stage) with standards which are generally very low in comparison to those expected for most three-year-olds. The school is part of a children's centre.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

This is an outstanding school that gives excellent value for money. A parent rightly commented that, 'the school has a first class captain and is a very sturdy ship with an excellent crew.'

Achievement is excellent. Standards are average. Most children, when they start school in the Foundation Stage, have very low standards, compared with those that are typical for their age. They make excellent progress and achieve exceptionally well so that by the time they enter Year 1 standards are only slightly below expectations. In the 2006 assessments at the end of Year 2, the school's results were average overall but an above average proportion of pupils exceeded the standard expected for their age. This represents excellent progress from the children's very low starting points.

Pupils' personal development, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is excellent. The pupils enjoy school and feel safe and well looked after. Pupils have an excellent understanding of how to stay healthy. Behaviour is good and relationships are excellent. Most pupils are confident and have high self-esteem. This helps them to make excellent progress. The average attendance is improving and most pupils attend school regularly. Pupils make an excellent contribution to the school and wider community and are very well prepared for the next stage of their education.

Teaching and learning are excellent. Lessons are lively and interesting and teachers make excellent use of assessment in order to provide work suitable for all abilities. Pupils have very good skills in reviewing their own progress in order to make improvements. The curriculum is excellent. There are many visits to places of interest, visitors and extra-curricular activities to provide enrichment and extend learning. The curriculum is enhanced by very good links with outside agencies and with the local children's centre. There is a very strong focus on the teaching of literacy, numeracy and information communication technology (ICT) and on extending skills by linking them with other subjects.

Care and guidance are excellent. Relationships are excellent and pupils grow in confidence and self-esteem. This contributes significantly to their academic progress. All procedures for safeguarding and child protection are in place. There are extremely rigorous systems for assessing and checking pupils' progress and these are used very effectively by the school to ensure that pupils know what they need to do in order to improve.

Leadership and management are excellent. The headteacher provides exemplary leadership and communicates her very clear vision for improvement to staff extremely well. This ensures there is a cohesive drive that is raising standards and improving provision. All staff work very well as a team. Governance is very good. Governors have a very clear understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses and play a full part in helping to shape its direction.

What the school should do to improve further

- There are no significant areas for improvement.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

Achievement is excellent and pupils reach average standards from a very low starting point. Pupils, whatever their background, make excellent progress because the school makes excellent

use of its assessment and tracking systems to ensure all pupils achieve to the best of their ability. The school complements this very effectively by excellent teaching and a very rich and stimulating curriculum.

The children join the Nursery with very low standards compared with those expected for their ages. They make excellent progress which continues throughout the Reception year in all areas of learning. When they enter Year 1, their standards are only slightly below what is expected nationally.

The school's results of the 2006 assessments at the end of Year 2 in reading, writing and mathematics were average overall, although the proportion of pupils reaching the higher levels in all these subjects was above average. This represents excellent progress from their low standards when they start school. Pupils in the current Year 2 continue to make excellent progress although the school expects standards to be below average because there is a large proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities in this group. These pupils are receiving effective support to ensure they progress as well as other pupils.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils' personal development, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent. This underpins their exceptionally high academic achievement. Most pupils have an excellent understanding of how to lead healthy lifestyles. They eat healthily throughout the day and get plenty of exercise. Relationships are excellent. This helps to raise self-esteem and to improve the confidence with which pupils approach their work. Pupils behave well, say that they feel safe and confidently explain why they enjoy school. A parent commented that her child cannot understand that he has to have holidays because he enjoys school so much. The attendance of a small group of pupils whose parents do not ensure that they attend regularly means that attendance is broadly average. However, as a result of strategies implemented by the school this is improving. Pupils have many opportunities to take on responsibility. They are consulted about developments in school such as improvements to the grounds. 'Buddies' and 'VIPs' help others and contribute very effectively to the smooth running of the school. Pupils make very good contributions to the local and wider communities. They are very well prepared for their future economic well-being. For example, they collaborate very well and there are very good links with business and industry.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 1

Teaching and learning are excellent. Teachers make extremely good use of assessment to give pupils work that is suitably challenging for differing abilities. Planning is consistent throughout the school and lessons are typically lively and interesting so that pupils want to learn. For example, pupils in Year 2 made very effective preparations for their writing by rehearsing their ideas through drama. Relationships are excellent and this helps to create positive attitudes to learning. Teachers and support assistants work very well together, particularly in support of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and pupils who learn English as an additional language. This enables them to progress at the same rate as other pupils. Pupils show very good skills in reviewing their learning and this gives them a very good understanding of how they can improve their work. This is enhanced by the teachers' very clear explanations of learning

objectives and by the excellent guidance pupils receive from teachers' marking on what they need to do to make their work even better.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The curriculum is excellent. The very wide range of enrichment activities makes an important contribution to high achievement and helps to develop positive attitudes by making learning exciting and stimulating. In order to extend learning the school ensures that there are many visitors to school and frequently take pupils out of school to visit places of interest. This includes residential visits. There is a very wide range of extra-curricular activities and further enrichment is provided by people such as artists in residence, dance specialists and musicians and by the very well resourced and attractive classrooms. Pupils extend their skills in literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT) in other subjects. This gives a relevance and purpose to learning. The curriculum is well adapted to individual needs and learning styles. For example, there is an extremely good balance of opportunities for pupils who learn best by seeing, hearing or by using practical activities. The very good links with outside agencies and the local children's centre extend the curriculum well.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Care guidance and support are excellent and this contributes significantly to high achievement. This is a very caring school where each pupil is highly valued. There are very close links with parents and they are very confident to approach the school should they have any concerns. The school makes very good use of outside agencies to support all pupils so that they progress at the same rate. Pupils know that if they have any worries they can make use of the friendship stop, work with the learning mentor or parent support advisor, or use the nurture room in order to receive help. Child protection and risk assessment procedures are very good and the school carefully follows government recommendations for safeguarding pupils. There are extremely comprehensive and rigorous assessment and tracking systems. This enables teachers and leaders to check progress and ensure that all pupils achieve to the best of their ability.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

Leadership and management are excellent. The headteacher provides very strong and inspirational leadership. She has an extremely clear vision for raising standards and improving provision. This is shared with staff and governors so that they form a very effective team committed to meeting challenging targets. This is enhanced by the excellent assessment and tracking system which helps to sharpen teaching and learning and leads to high achievement. The school evaluates its performance extremely well so that development plan priorities are very well chosen. These are then implemented thoroughly. For example, the focus on personal development and the enrichment of the curriculum help to provide strong foundations for learning. Issues from the previous inspection have been successfully addressed. The vast majority of parents are very positive about the school and have many opportunities to be involved in their children's learning. Governance is very good. Governors know the school very well and this enables them to provide very good support and to hold it to account for its performance.

Subject leaders have a very good understanding of their subjects and lead their areas of responsibility very effectively, making significant contributions to raising standards.

A relentless drive to raise standards and improve provision, very thorough evaluation of performance and a very clear shared vision for improvement give the school excellent capacity to improve.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	School Overall
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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?	1
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

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

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The behaviour of learners	2
The attendance of learners	3
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	1
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1

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

Annex A

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

27 June 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Victoria Infant School, Islay Place, Workington CA14 3XB

Thank you for making me so welcome when I came to visit your school. Your school is very special and I enjoyed being with you because you were so polite and helpful. I was very pleased to hear that you all know about the importance of eating properly and getting plenty of exercise. I also thought that the buddies and VIPs are very good at helping others and you all get on with each other really well. I enjoyed our conversations and think that you are really good at talking to visitors. I was very pleased to hear that you feel safe and well looked after.

These are some of the things your school does well.

- You all work very hard and try to do your best so that your work gets better.
- Lessons are fun and teachers help you by giving you work that helps you to improve.
- There are lots of interesting clubs, visits and visitors so that learning is really enjoyable and you want to come to school.
- Your teachers keep a very good check how well you are doing so that you get extra help if you need it.
- Everyone in school is made to feel very important and you are extremely well looked after.
- All the teachers work really hard to make sure that your school is as good as it can be.

Thank you once again for looking after me so well.

Yours sincerely

David Earley

Lead inspector