

# Victoria Junior School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	112204
<b>Local Authority</b>	Cumbria
<b>Inspection number</b>	310811
<b>Inspection dates</b>	17–18 April 2008
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Jonathan Sutcliffe

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Junior
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	7–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School	203
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mr Steve Buckley
<b>Headteacher</b>	Ms Caroline Vernon
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	1 February 2005
<b>School address</b>	Devonshire Road Barrow-in-Furness Cumbria LA14 5NE
<b>Telephone number</b>	01229 894656
<b>Fax number</b>	01229 894657

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

## Description of the school

Victoria Junior is an average size school. It serves an area characterised by a mixture of privately owned and local authority housing. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is average. Almost all the pupils are from White British backgrounds and consequently the number of pupils who speak English as a second language is below the national average. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is above average.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 2

This is a good school with many outstanding features. It gives its pupils a good standard of education and helps them to achieve well and reach above average standards. The school provides good value for money. This is how the school sees itself and it is right to do so. One parent's comment echoed the views of many: 'A very good school with great home/school communication. Both my children have made really good progress.' Pupils' personal development and their care, support and guidance are excellent. All staff promote pupils' safety and well-being very well and pupils reflect this by showing care and consideration for each other. They have positive attitudes to learning and their behaviour and relationships are exemplary. An achievement assembly clearly demonstrated that everyone is valued as an individual in the school. Not only did pupils receive awards to celebrate excellent work and positive attitudes, but they also awarded certificates to staff for 'always being there for me.' Pupils gain an exceptionally good understanding of how to make positive choices and understand how to keep safe. A comprehensive programme to develop their critical and creative thinking skills is preparing them extremely well for later life. As one member of the school council said, 'It is giving us life-long learning skills.' Pupils are interested in their work and want to do well because the well planned and outstanding curriculum is enriched by additional activities that extend pupils' experiences and skills. Good provision exists for pupils to acquire skills in information and communication technology (ICT) and they use these skills effectively to support their learning in other curriculum areas. The outstanding display work across the school motivates the pupils to succeed and achieve.

Pupils' attainment when they start school is varied but many start with skills that are just above those typical for their age. As they move through the school, good teaching ensures they make good progress. By the end of Year 6, standards in mathematics are above average. In science they are significantly above average. Over time standards in English have been above average, but in 2007 results in the Year 6 tests fell to below average in writing. This was largely due to the school adopting a new commercial approach to the teaching of writing which has needed more time to impact on pupils' progress. The headteacher has now successfully implemented plans to accelerate progress and standards in writing have improved and are now above average. However, there are occasions in some classes when the work set for the more able pupils in writing and in mathematics is not challenging enough. As a result, these pupils do not always achieve their potential.

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher, fully supported by her colleagues, leads and manages the school very effectively. There is a shared vision amongst staff for the school's development and a very strong drive for improvement. There is a 'family atmosphere' in the school; an ethos which is highly valued by the parents. The school has developed well since its last inspection and has good capacity to improve even further.

### What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the achievement of more able pupils in writing and mathematics.

## Achievement and standards

### Grade: 2

Although pupils' attainment varies when they start the school year-on-year, many start with skills that are typically just above those expected for their age group. Pupils make good progress

as they move through the school and achieve well. There are no significant differences between the performance of boys and girls. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress because they are well supported by teachers and classroom assistants. Standards are above average in mathematics and significantly above in science. Over time, standards in English have been above average. However, although reading standards were above average in the Year 6 national tests in 2007, standards in writing fell to below average. Additional support, guidance and improved assessment of how pupils are performing have helped raise standards in writing. The pupils' work in the present Year 6 and the targets they have been set for the end of key stage tests, indicate above average standards. As many of these pupils were below average when they started school, this represents good achievement. However, there are occasions in some classes when more able pupils do not make the progress they should in writing and mathematics.

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 1**

Pupils' personal development and well-being, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, are outstanding. Learning is given a real purpose in the school, enabling pupils to follow their own ideas as well as working successfully with others. Pupils clearly enjoy this way of working and this is reflected in above average attendance, exemplary behaviour and excellent relationships. Pupils value their roles in the running of the school and their strong contribution to the wider community outside school. Whether they are play leaders, prefects or singing at the local church, they take their duties very seriously with great pride and a strong sense of responsibility. Although the vast majority of pupils are from White British backgrounds, they develop a very strong commitment to racial equality through studying different religions, and practising a variety of creative arts from other countries. An excellent presentation by pupils of African drumming and singing was celebrated in an assembly. Fundraising activities for different charities flourish because of the pupils' desire to be involved and help people less fortunate than themselves. Pupils have a thorough understanding of how to keep fit, healthy and safe because it is given a high profile in the school. The school council have been very effective in introducing and running a healthy tuck shop. A wealth of sporting activities are very well attended after school and their excellence is recognised in the Sportsmark Gold Award.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 2**

Teaching is good and occasionally outstanding. There is strong support between staff and this ensures that good practice is shared and embedded into successful teaching and learning. A recent focus on improving the teaching of writing has resulted in better writing across the curriculum and improved progress. Pupils enjoy their learning because they are encouraged to participate in lessons and relationships with their teachers are outstanding. Because pupils help to set the success criteria for lessons, they clearly know what they are expected to learn. In the outstanding teaching, pupils make exceptionally good progress because the expectations are very high and probing questions make pupils think hard. In a lesson on ratio and proportion, challenging activities were related to real life situations and pupils enthusiastically used their problem-solving skills to complete the work successfully. Occasionally, the whole class teaching sessions for writing and mathematics are rushed and more able pupils do not extend their thinking skills enough in discussions or answering questions. These pupils are not always set

challenging enough work in independent tasks in writing and mathematics to enable them to make good progress.

## **Curriculum and other activities**

**Grade: 1**

### **Care, guidance and support**

**Grade: 1**

The school takes exceptional care of its pupils. It is totally committed to their welfare and especially the most vulnerable. Through very close partnerships with outside agencies, pupils receive generous support to meet their different needs. This contributes significantly to their successful learning. There are excellent systems to support new pupils and help them to settle quickly, such as 'buddies' and peer support groups. Pupils say they feel safe in school. Bullying is rare because of the great care shown by everyone and a very effective behaviour policy. Checks on the suitability of adults to work with children meet government requirements and a thorough assessment is made of the potential risks in visits away from school. Child protection procedures are clear and comprehensive.

Procedures to track and monitor pupils' academic progress are very effective. Assessment is very thorough, and particularly effective in assessing key thinking skills across all subjects. This represents a significant improvement since the previous inspection. Through reviewing their own personal targets and very helpful marking, pupils are well informed about how well they are progressing and what they need to do to improve further.

## **Leadership and management**

**Grade: 2**

The headteacher has a very clear vision of a caring community in which every child is important. Her inspirational and outstanding leadership has a positive impact on all her staff. Together with the senior management team, she has brought about a drive for continual improvement. As a result, pupils' personal development, care and curriculum provision are excellent. Senior leaders have provided a very positive lead to resolve the recent dip in standards and achievement in writing. Good use has been made of local authority consultants to provide advice and guidance to staff and this has had a positive effect on raising standards and progress. However, there is more to do to ensure that the progress of the more able pupils is accelerated consistently in writing and mathematics.

The governing body provides good support to the school. They monitor the school's performance and are beginning to focus their visits on agreed priorities. Subject leaders manage their subjects well and have opportunities to reflect on the strengths and areas for development. The recently established system for assessing pupils' progress in subjects other than English and mathematics is outstanding. The school has an accurate understanding of its own effectiveness and how it can be improved. Regular monitoring of teaching and learning by senior and middle managers is further improving pupils' progress and attainment. Clear plans to address the recommendations from the last inspection have helped the school move forward and ensure it is able to improve even further. Parents are overwhelmingly positive about the school and make a good contribution to their child's learning. They have good opportunities to share their views and to contribute towards the school's self-evaluation process.

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## Annex A

## Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	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?	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

### Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2

### 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 extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	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?	2
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

<sup>1</sup> 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**

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2
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

21 April 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Victoria Junior School, Barrow-in-Furness, Cumbria,

LA14 5NE

As you know we visited your school recently to find out how well you are doing. Thank you for looking after us and making us feel welcome. Thank you also for talking to us about your school, the work you have done and how much you enjoy coming to school. This letter is to tell you what we found. You go to a good school that helps you make good progress and do well.

What we liked about your school:

- your attendance at the school is good; you behave very well and thoroughly enjoy all aspects of school
- you are very polite, helpful and friendly
- teachers plan interesting lessons and you have an excellent range of visits, visitors and clubs in which many of you take part
- you have very good opportunities to do well in subjects such as science, art, physical education and French
- the staff look after you very well and give you excellent support
- you have very good opportunities to take responsibility and you take them seriously
- the headteacher and other staff lead and manage the school well.

Many of you do well in your work but some of you could do even better. In order to help, we have asked the school to make sure that work is always challenging in writing and mathematics for those of you who are capable of achieving the higher levels.

We thoroughly enjoyed listening to you and watching you learn. We wish you all well in the future.

Yours sincerely

Jonathan Sutcliffe

Lead Inspector