

Victoria Infant and Nursery School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	112210
Local Authority	Cumbria
Inspection number	310813
Inspection date	14 May 2008
Reporting inspector	Lynne Read

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	242
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Linda Last
Headteacher	Miss Susan O'Neill
Date of previous school inspection	1 March 2005
School address	Oxford Street Barrow-in-Furness Cumbria LA14 5QN
Telephone number	01229 894658
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

The inspector evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues: achievement, standards, teaching and learning in the Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1; pupils' attitudes and behaviour; the breadth of the curriculum in meeting all pupils' needs; enrichment activities; health and safety and safeguarding procedures; the quality and impact of leadership and management. Evidence was gathered from: observations, assessment data, records and documents; parents' replies to the questionnaires; discussions with staff, governors and pupils. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail but the inspector found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given in its self-evaluation, were not justified and these have been included where appropriate in this report

Description of the school

This is a large Infant and Nursery school, serving families from two different wards. One of these is advantaged in social and economic terms; the other has a marked degree of disadvantage. The majority of pupils are of White British heritage, with a few having European, Asian or African heritage. A below average number claim their entitlement to free school meals. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below average. All Key Stage 1 classes are organised on a mixed age basis. The school provides before and after school care for pupils from Reception up to the age of seven.

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 some outstanding features. It provides good value for money. Parents have very positive views of the school and describe it as a 'warm and open school with a family atmosphere'. Other comments include praise for the 'helpful, approachable staff' and the way that 'each child is looked at as an individual and each one helped to succeed in their own strengths'.

Standards are above average and pupils achieve well. On entry to Year 1, pupils' attainment is mostly typical for this age although there are wide variations. Some have surpassed expectations while others are below, especially in language and communication. All make good progress through Key Stage 1 and standards in the Year 2 teacher assessments are consistently above average. Pupils' current work is equally good with some further improvements in reading over the year. An additional emphasis on teaching sounds and letters and the introduction of a pupil-parent book club have helped to boost progress. Pupils who have additional needs have excellent support and achieve very well from their starting points. Boys and girls achieve equally well.

Pupils learn well because they are taught well. They benefit from an inventive way of organising learning across the mixed-age classes. Pupils' progress is assessed regularly and they work in ability or 'focus' groups for English and mathematics. This means that the pace and challenge of learning is tailored to meet their needs. Generally, this works well. The more able often have problem solving work which helps to develop very good thinking and collaborative skills. Pupils who have learning or emotional difficulties have excellent support in the 'nurture group' where tasks are finely tuned to build on previous learning. This helps to develop good self esteem among the pupils. The majority of lessons have a fast pace with teachers including practical and oral tasks to hold pupils' attention. On a few occasions, especially in the average attaining groups, pupils sit listening passively for too long and the work for the faster learners within those groups does not always challenge them to the full. In all groups, some lively class discussions arise because pupils are encouraged to express their ideas and opinions. Well trained teaching assistants guide and encourage pupils, thus enabling them to succeed. Teachers give excellent guidance for pupils through oral feedback in lessons. Useful targets are included in books, and shared with parents, so everyone knows what needs improving.

The good curriculum is another important factor underpinning good progress. It provides a good balance in developing pupils' creative, practical and personal talents, as well as their academic skills. There is good enhancement for learning through visits and visitors, both of which inject excitement into the curriculum. A strong feature of the curriculum is the 'May fun' when staff cleverly combine teacher assessment times with a carousel of interesting activities. Parents say this reduces any pressure on the pupils who look forward to this time in the school year. Valuable links with other agencies support pupils' education well. Some of the benefits include developments to school grounds by a local business, and the provision of expert tuition and resources to meet pupils' specific needs.

Pupils' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural education, is outstanding and supported through an excellent programme of personal education. Pupils thoroughly enjoy coming to school and behave extremely well. They work hard to meet the 'Alpha Frog' challenges and to have their names entered in the 'Golden Book' or 'Wall of Fame' for good effort or thoughtful deeds. They are happy and confident learners because they have

excellent relationships with their teachers. Attendance and punctuality are good. Meticulous attention is given to care and support and safeguarding measures meet requirements. As a result, pupils feel secure and say that adults in school are always on hand to help. The National Healthy Schools Award recognises the excellent work done in teaching pupils about healthy living. They have a secure understanding of good diet and describe their daily exercise sessions as 'good fun and getting harder and harder'. Pupils carry out a wide range of responsibilities within school, such as that of class monitor. These opportunities, together with a good level of basic skills, mean that pupils are well prepared for their junior education and future lives. Various school committees ensure that pupils' views are known and taken into account. For example, they decided on the playground developments and had much to say in the refurbishment of their new 'bathrooms'.

Leadership and management are good. Key issues from the previous inspection have been addressed and standards are much improved. The school has good capacity to maintain its strengths and improve further. The headteacher provides inspirational leadership and is constantly driving the school forwards. She has the confidence and respect of staff, governors, parents and pupils. One parent commented, 'this is a tightly managed ship with a headteacher who really cares about the children'. All staff work as a strong team, providing a good continuity of approach and a bright, stimulating learning environment. This illustrates their commitment to providing the best they can for pupils. The new management team monitor achievement and provision, set challenging targets and make improvements where needed. Although proven to be effective, the systems for recording pupil progress are inefficient. Individual pupil's records of achievement are not collated so checking the performance of classes or groups over time is more complicated and time consuming than it need be. Governors bring a good range of expertise and experience to enhance management and many are active in the daily life of the school. Governance is good and all statutory requirements are met.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children join the school with a very broad range of skills. Overall, their development on entry is typical for the age group although several have difficulty with speech, communication and personal skills. Good introduction arrangements ensure that children settle quickly. They make good progress in the Nursery and Reception classes, developing a broad foundation for their future education. There is excellent provision for children who need extra help, for example weekly speech therapy sessions are arranged. Behaviour is very good and children are well versed in class routines. They thoroughly enjoy their work and collaborate well. Children enjoy a wide range of teacher-led tasks. Independent learning is supported well through an interesting selection of 'free choice' activities, both indoors and out.

On one day each week, Nursery and Reception children work together in groups and share both assembly and playtime with Key Stage 1 pupils. They learn much from the experiences which prepare them well for the move into their next classes. For example, Nursery children gleaned much from working alongside older friends in the computer suite. Subsequently, they developed great confidence in using the mouse and icons to draw, paint and colour on screen.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that all lessons consistently include good challenge and pace of learning for all pupils.
- Develop a collated system for recording pupil progress so managers have a more efficient system for checking on the performance of classes and groups.

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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?	2
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ 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	2

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?	2
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?	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	2
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

15 May 2008

Dear Children

Inspection of Victoria Infant and Nursery School, Cumbria, LA14 5QN

Thank you for the very warm welcome you gave me when I visited your school. I appreciated all the help you gave me and the interesting conversations we had. In return, I would like to tell you what I discovered.

Victoria Infant and Nursery is a good school. Some of the things that impressed me most were your good behaviour and the way you care for each other. It was lovely to see you enjoying yourselves at playtime. I think you are very lucky to have your own playboat and an adventure trail. How sensible of you to wear caps in the sunshine. You are learning to think for yourselves and making good choices. It was good to see your vegetable plot and the eco work you are doing. I think you will make good citizens of the future.

Please thank your parents for sending lots of replies to the questionnaire. They are very pleased with the school. Many told us how much you love coming every day and they are pleased with how well you are doing. Some were a bit worried about the different groups you have in the mornings. Perhaps you could tell them how much you enjoy working like this, just as you told me.

You are learning at a good rate and have worked hard to improve your reading even further this year. Well done! Your mathematics' work is coming along very well and you are good at mental arithmetic. I especially enjoyed the lessons where you worked on some challenging problems together or discussed things with the teacher. You were enjoying these activities and stretching your brains to the full. In some lessons though, you spent a long time just listening and your teachers will be including more practical work and harder tasks to keep you all on your toes. You have very good attitudes to your learning so I am sure you will enjoy the changes. I have also discussed with your teachers how time can be saved in checking your progress.

Thank you once again for the interesting conversations I had. I tried to see all of you at work and I apologise if I missed anyone as you moved between your focus groups. However, I did see you all behaving beautifully in assembly and I loved your singing and music making. There is a great deal about your school of which you and the staff can be very proud. Please accept my best wishes for the future.

Yours sincerely

Mrs Lynne Read

Lead inspector