

Victoria Infant and Nursery School

Islay Place, Workington, Cumbria, CA14 3XB

Inspection dates 13–14 January 2015

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Outstanding	1
	This inspection:	Outstanding	1
Leadership and management		Outstanding	1
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Outstanding	1
Quality of teaching		Outstanding	1
Achievement of pupils		Outstanding	1
Early years provision		Outstanding	1

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an outstanding school.

- This is an exceptionally caring school where all staff show their dedication in supporting pupils and their families.
- Children get off to a flying start in early years where they become very inquisitive and highly motivated in learning new things. They achieve well.
- By the time they leave Year 2, most pupils reach standards that are above the national average in reading and writing. Standards in mathematics are broadly in line with the national average and improving rapidly across year groups. Pupils are extremely well prepared for the next stage in their education.
- Throughout their time at school pupils make outstanding progress both in their academic achievement and personal development.
- Most disabled pupils and those with special educational needs usually make progress at rates similar to their classmates, as do disadvantaged pupils.
- Outstanding teaching stimulates and supports pupils' exceptional learning. They are enthused and excited by wide ranging activities both within school and beyond.
- Pupils' behaviour is exemplary because, from an early age, they are effectively encouraged to respect each other and the adults around them.
- Pupils are keen to come to school. This is reflected in above average attendance.
- Exceptional links with external agencies and families lead to highly effective support for pupils whose circumstances might make them vulnerable. As a result, pupils say they feel very safe.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding is extremely well developed.
- The subjects taught include a wide range of sporting activities and pupils gain valuable experience through the arts and using modern technologies. In addition, pupils' lives are enriched by a wide range of visits and after-school activities that provide memorable experiences.
- The school is exceptionally well led and managed. All staff are given targets directly linked to improving the school. However, not all targets are precise enough in how they will be measured.
- The executive and acting headteachers inspire staff to always give of their best. They also play a key role in helping staff in other schools to raise the quality of teaching and learning.
- Governors are highly effective and fully involved in all aspects of school life. All staff, including leaders, managers and the governing body, work extremely well as a team. Their successful actions have led to sustained improvements in the quality of teaching and pupils' achievements.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed teaching in 10 part-lessons, one of which was observed jointly with the executive headteacher. Sessions led by teaching assistants were also observed. In addition, the acting headteacher joined an inspector in making a number of short visits to several lessons. Inspectors also listened to pupils read.
- Discussions were held with: school staff; groups of pupils; the executive and acting headteachers; governors; parents; and a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors observed the school's work and looked at a wide range of documentation, including safeguarding documents, the school's procedures for gaining an accurate view of its own performance, its development plans, records of pupils' standards and progress, documents relating to attendance and behaviour, and pupils' work in their books.
- There were 22 parental responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) which the inspectors took into account. Inspectors met with parents informally as they brought their children to school. Thirty responses to the inspection questionnaire for staff were also reviewed by inspectors.

Inspection team

Naomi Taylor, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Alistair Younger	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Victoria Infant and Nursery is an average sized school.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils supported by the pupil premium is much higher than that found nationally. The pupil premium is additional government funding for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and children who are looked after by the local authority.
- The proportion of pupils with special educational needs is much higher than the national average.
- Almost all pupils are White British. A much smaller than average proportion is from minority ethnic backgrounds. Similarly a very small minority speak English as an additional language.
- The early years provision is part time in Nursery and full time in Reception.
- The school has close links with the Children's Centre which is on the same site.
- Almost half of the children are supported by 'Early Help' which involves a range of professional services working with the school to support families.
- The school manages child care provision on site which is subject to separate inspection and receives a separate report, available on the Ofsted website.
- Several pupils join the school during Key Stage 1.
- The school holds numerous awards. Since the previous inspection the school has gained Artsmark Gold Award for the third time, the National Quality label and European Quality label award. The school has links with several overseas schools.
- The executive headteacher is a National Leader in Education. The acting headteacher leads the West Coast Teaching School Alliance and is vice-chair of the West Coast Local Alliance. Together with other leaders and managers in school who are Specialist Leaders in Education, they provide support for other local schools.
- The school is an accredited provider for training new teachers.
- The school is a National Lead School in the network of the Teaching Excellence in Computing Science.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that all targets set for staff can be precisely measured by colleagues with whole school responsibility, particularly in improving pupils' achievement even further.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are outstanding

- The executive and acting headteachers are highly ambitious for the school and show the strongest commitment to providing the best possible learning experience for all pupils. Together, they have the full support of staff and governors. They have led the successful implementation of strategies to improve learning and teaching which demonstrates that the school is well placed to continue to improve.
- The school improvement plan and self-evaluation are realistic and rigorous. This is because school leaders check very effectively on the quality of learning and teaching in the school and have a crystal clear view of how they can continue to raise standards.
- Middle leaders have grown in confidence, developing very well their skills in checking on the quality of teaching and the progress of pupils in their areas of responsibility. Colleagues with whole school responsibility have successfully raised standards year on year. Nevertheless, some targets set for them cannot be measured precisely enough to help them be totally clear about what pupils could achieve. Several leaders and managers use their highly developed skills to support other schools in the West Coast Teaching Alliance.
- Teachers and teaching assistants are extremely well supported to improve the quality of their teaching and guidance for pupils, particularly through rigorous staff appraisal and the high-quality training they receive.
- The tracking system used in school enables staff to check very closely pupils' progress against their targets. Any differences in the progress of the different groups of pupils are closed effectively as they move up through the school. Pupils with additional needs, including the most able and least able, are identified quickly and supported through programmes and activities that are closely matched to their learning needs. For example, in the current Year 2 there is a mathematics intervention class running to support a group of pupils whose progress was not rapid enough during the last half term.
- The local authority provides minimal support for the school, reflecting their view of the excellent capacity of leaders and managers to drive improvements, not just in this school but in others too.
- Pupil premium funding is used effectively. It is directed towards supporting those disadvantaged pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals so that they make the same outstanding progress as their classmates. School leaders and all staff demonstrate very clearly their commitment to ensuring all pupils have equal opportunities to succeed.
- The rich and vibrant curriculum enthuses and excites pupils and prepares them extremely well for life in modern Britain. High quality art work, musical performances locally and sporting challenges demonstrate how pupils are encouraged to excel in all that they do.
- The primary school sport funding is used to maximum effect to broaden sporting opportunities for pupils, while developing the expertise of staff, using specialist coaches. This has, for example, led to a huge increase in opportunities for pupils to try activities such as multi-skills, cricket and dance. The uptake of and engagement in sport after school has significantly increased and helps pupils to stay healthy and promotes their well-being.
- The promotion of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is exceptional. Pupils have a highly developed understanding of British values and make meaningful comparisons of religions and cultures which are different from their own. This is helped by their international links with school children in France, Estonia and Poland.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors are highly committed to and supportive of the school. They regularly attend training so that they have the knowledge and skills needed to hold leaders to account for standards at the school. The governing body have a very accurate view of pupils' achievement and the quality of teaching because they receive comprehensive reports from the headteacher which they meticulously question and challenge. They are regular visitors to the school and to lessons. Governors check that systems to manage staff performance are implemented and that teachers' pay reflects how effective they are. They also ensure that the pupil premium funding is used to support those pupils for whom it is intended and that spending has a positive impact on eligible pupils. Governors make sure that statutory safeguarding requirements are met: pupils and staff are kept safe. The budget is prudently spent.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding**Behaviour**

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding.
- There is an extremely strong commitment to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Consequently, pupils are very happy in school, behave exceptionally well and really look after each other.
- All parents who met the inspectors and almost all of those who responded to Parent View believe the pupils are well behaved. Pupils agree with this view.
- There are growing numbers of pupils who join the school other than at the usual times. Several have behavioural difficulties. Victoria Infants has a highly successful track record of nurturing pupils and working with their families to help them to choose appropriate behaviours. Reward systems are so effective that sanctions are rarely needed.
- In lessons and around school pupils are extremely courteous towards each other, the adults around them and visitors. They look smart in their uniforms and clearly enjoy learning and playing within the bright and vibrant surroundings that the school provides.
- Pupils really value being trusted to take on the range of responsibilities available to them. For example, each week a class 'VIP' will collect the register and undertake other responsibilities.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is outstanding.
- Pupils say they feel extremely safe in school. They thoroughly understand different forms of bullying, although they say it just does not happen at this school. For example, the work the school has done to ensure pupils understand prejudiced-based bullying has resulted in pupils being very clear that everyone is unique and everyone deserves respect.
- Pupils have a very clear understanding of the importance of e-safety both when at school and at home. Parents are also very well informed of the potential dangers and how to keep their children safe.
- All parents who responded to Parent View believe the school keeps their children safe.
- Pupils develop an excellent understanding of how to stay safe beyond school. For example, a police officer gave a talk at school in the autumn term to ensure pupils knew how to keep themselves safe on Guy Fawkes Night.
- An annual residential trip takes place for Year 2 pupils. They gain a great deal from visiting an outdoor education centre and safely having a go at new experiences such as canoeing. This helps them to develop an understanding of measuring risk and taking precautions when attempting unfamiliar challenges.
- Attendance is higher than the national average and reflects the success of the school's strategies to improve attendance since the previous inspection. Punctuality is excellent for most pupils although the school continues to work with some families whose children are not always punctual.

The quality of teaching is outstanding

- The inspirational executive and acting headteachers have been relentless in continually driving improvements in teaching, resulting in the quality of teaching remaining outstanding overall and never less than good. They expect nothing but the best from staff and pupils who all rise daily to this challenge.
- Throughout school, pupils enjoy opportunities to use new technologies across many subjects to find out things for themselves and so develop their skills of self-reliance as they learn. Regular homework is set for older pupils who strive diligently to reach high standards in all that they do.
- A love of reading is very effectively encouraged from the time pupils start school in the early years. The very youngest children are encouraged to borrow books so that they can become familiar with the pleasure that books can bring. During the inspection, a parent was thrilled with the progress her child was making having listened to her reading the previous evening. Reading logs record the amount of reading completed in school and at home and is an important communication tool between parents and staff.
- Staff are highly skilled in story telling. In Nursery, inspectors observed how children became spellbound as they listened to stories unfold. Staff demonstrated their skills in questioning children to recall the sequence of events and their understanding. They were asked what time of year it is when the leaves fall from the trees. There was no hesitation as children called out 'it's autumn' and then proceeded to remember that leaves would be brown, yellow or gold. This illustrated how effectively they had learnt from their topic

based on autumn in the previous term.

- From the time they start in Nursery, children are encouraged to write. The inspectors observed adults encouraging children to draw the letters 's' and 'a' in fake snow. There were huge smiles as the children carefully and repeatedly drew the letters and saw how their accuracy was improving. Not a second was wasted as the adult asked the children to describe how the 'snow' felt and what it looked like. This stimulated the children to speak out loud and share their thoughts leading them to increase their range of vocabulary.
- In Year 1, pupils take it in turns to take Heather, the teddy, home for a few days. Using their own tablet computer provided by the school, they take photos to record what they have done and where they have been. They then write in Heather's diary and this is shared with the rest of the class. Pupils told the inspectors that they really enjoy hearing about Heather's adventures and it clearly stimulates them to write and record things.
- There is a whole-school approach to teaching mathematics which has accelerated rapidly pupils' progress. During the inspection, pupils in Year 2 were learning how to identify numbers greater than or less than other numbers. Depending on their abilities, pupils used either one or two-digit numbered dice to record carefully the numbers thrown. They then took the lower number away from the higher number and checked their answers using beads. Most pupils made excellent progress with this work.
- Highly effective teamwork by teachers, skilled teaching assistants, volunteers and students ensure a high level of support for all groups of pupils.
- Marking is of a very high quality. Pupils respond to teachers' marking in order to correct or improve their work and learn from their mistakes.

The achievement of pupils

is outstanding

- Though children make outstanding progress in the early years classes, they start Year 1 with skills below those typically found. Pupils go on to make outstanding progress across Key Stage 1. As a result, they reach skills in reading and writing that are higher than the national average. Standards in mathematics were just above the national average in 2014. New initiatives in teaching mathematics are speeding up pupils' progress.
- The school provides strong support for those pupils who are in the very early stages of learning English. As a result, they are well prepared for the next stage in their learning. They are extremely well equipped to further develop their literacy and numeracy skills when they transfer to the nearby junior school where the executive headteacher also works as headteacher.
- The school's pupil progress information and work seen in pupils' books show that pupils develop their skills in reading, writing and mathematics more rapidly as they move up through the school. This is because their language and communication skills are improving at the same time.
- The proportion of Year 1 pupils reaching the required standard in matching letters to the sounds that they make increased again in 2014, although it is slightly lower than national levels. Pupils who spoke to inspectors were positive about reading and felt that they had plenty of opportunities to read to adults in school.
- The school provides exceptional support to the increasing number of pupils who are disabled, have serious health issues and those with special educational needs. Carefully planned small group and one-to-one sessions help pupils to learn and achieve well but for the majority of the time, pupils are taught together very effectively. The additional needs of pupils who join the school at times other than the expected are also extremely well catered for.
- In Year 2 in 2014, disadvantaged pupils attained standards in reading, writing and mathematics very similar to non-disadvantaged pupils in the school and higher than this group nationally. It is evident that gaps narrow as pupils move through the school. This confirms the school's commitment to making sure all pupils have the same opportunities to succeed.
- The most able pupils make outstanding progress. The number of pupils reaching the higher Level 3 in reading and writing was in line with the national average although slightly lower in mathematics. Year on year, the proportions reaching Level 3 in reading, writing and mathematics are increasing.

The early years provision

is outstanding

- Excellent links between school and home ensure that children settle quickly into school life. The school has recently introduced a six week induction to improve even further the relationships between staff, pupils

and their parents before children start in Nursery. This is greatly valued by parents and explains why one parent told an inspector that her child has 'loved school from day one.'

- At the start of the school day, most parents of Reception children come into the classrooms and encourage their children to find their individual registration sheet which has their name at the top. The children place a gold star stamp on the correct day to show their attendance which is rewarded each week. This encourages parents to be involved in their children's learning and allows ample opportunities for parents and staff to share information.
- Teachers check thoroughly what children can do when they join the school. Many children are still wearing nappies and using dummies and their experiences beyond home are limited. The school works closely with external agencies to support children and their families both within school and at home. This means staff have an informed and detailed foundation on which to start their assessment and record of children's progress.
- Key workers continually observe children's learning and meticulously record their achievements. Staff use this information to ensure children benefit from challenging activities and probing questions and so quickly fill gaps in their experiences and learning.
- Children learn exceptionally well because of outstanding teaching by a dedicated staff team which is very effectively led and managed. They all understand the importance of developing children's communication skills and so provide many opportunities for parents to find out about how they can support learning at home.
- Children are encouraged to be inquisitive about their surroundings and engage wholeheartedly in their learning because of the encouragement and nurture they receive. A raft of opportunities and activities based around the interests of individuals are made available both in classrooms and outdoors. This helps build children's desire to learn.
- Outstanding teaching results in children being supported to make outstanding progress particularly with their speaking and listening skills and personal and social development. However, because starting points are significantly lower than those typically expected in all areas of learning, the proportion of children reaching a good level of development is about half of the national figure. All children are extremely well prepared for learning in Key Stage 1..

What inspection judgements mean

School	Grade	Judgement	Description
	Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
	Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
	Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
	Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	112144
Local authority	Cumbria
Inspection number	453348

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	207
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Bill Chicken
Executive Headteacher	Pauline Robertson
Acting Headteacher	Victoria Hepburn-Fish
Date of previous school inspection	28 April 2010
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