

Vicarage Park CofE Primary School

Vicarage Drive, Kendal, Cumbria LA9 5BP

Inspection dates

27–28 September 2017

Overall effectiveness	Good
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Good
Early years provision	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The focused and effective leadership of the headteacher, governors and senior leaders has successfully arrested the previous decline in the school's fortunes. A corner has been turned and the quality of education at Vicarage Park is now good.
- Leaders have a good understanding of the school's strengths and areas for improvement and are ambitious to maintain the school's forward momentum. Their vision is shared by staff and parents, the large majority of whom would recommend the school to others.
- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment across the school is good. Teaching in Years 5 and 6 is especially strong and highly effective. Teachers' subject knowledge is good and they use questioning well to move pupils' learning forward. Teaching assistants provide good support, particularly for those pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities.
- Pupils' personal development, behaviour and welfare are good. Pupils are polite and friendly and behave sensibly around school and on the playground. They said that they feel safe and enjoy coming to school.
- Provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is effective and the school prepares pupils well for life in modern Britain.
- The quality of provision in the early years has improved and is now good. Children settle in quickly, benefiting from engaging indoor and outdoor areas. They make good progress during their time in the Reception class. Most children achieve a good level of development by the end of the early years and so are well prepared for life in Year 1.
- The school provides pupils with a broad and balanced curriculum, which is effectively enhanced by a good range of extra-curricular clubs and activities. Provision for sport and art is particularly good, and pupils are proud to have the chance to represent their school in a variety of competitions.
- Although the quality of teaching has improved and is now good overall, some inconsistencies remain. Aspects of the strongest practice in the school are not yet secure in all classes. For example, some teaching lacks the precision and urgency of that which is most effective.
- Over time, too few pupils have reached the highest standards in mathematics, particularly in key stage 2. Too often, teachers fail to provide the most able pupils with work in mathematics that is challenging enough, and this slows the progress they make.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching and learning so that the most effective practice evident in the school becomes the norm across all year groups.
- Accelerate the progress in mathematics of the most able pupils so that more consistently achieve the high standards of which they are capable by ensuring that:
 - teachers consistently have high enough expectations of what the most able pupils are able to achieve in mathematics
 - teachers provide the most able pupils with work that fully challenges them and make sure that learning time is not lost completing activities that are too simple.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The focused and determined leadership of the headteacher, very well supported by other leaders in the school, has been instrumental in swiftly and effectively reversing a previously sharp decline in the school's fortunes. Leaders have secured improvements in every aspect of the school's work, so that Vicarage Park now provides its pupils with a good quality of education.
- School leaders have an accurate view of the school's strengths and weaknesses and ensure that plans are in place to tackle those areas in need of further improvement. Along with governors and staff, leaders have an ambitious vision for the school and are determined to make sure that it continues to move forward.
- Leaders with responsibility for key subjects are providing increasingly effective leadership and making an important contribution to the ongoing improvements across the school. They make regular checks on the progress of different initiatives, such as changes to the teaching of mathematics, but acknowledge that these checks could focus more sharply on the impact of initiatives on pupils' learning, especially that of the most able pupils.
- The school provides pupils with a suitably broad and balanced curriculum, which covers a range of different subjects, topics and themes. Pupils said that they particularly enjoy conducting scientific experiments, learning about people from different periods in history and producing pieces of artwork, some of which were displayed at the Westmorland Show. The curriculum is further enhanced by a good range of after-school clubs and trips to places of interest, such as Quarry Bank Mill.
- School leaders use the primary physical education (PE) and sport funding well, and have created a strong sporting culture in the school. A large number of pupils take part in various sports clubs and many have had the chance to represent the school in sports as diverse as lacrosse, cross-country running and cricket. Pupils are proud of the sports awards that the school has won.
- Leaders also make sure that other dedicated funding is used to good effect. The pupil premium funding is used effectively to support the small number of disadvantaged pupils, and inspection evidence confirms that these pupils typically progress well during their time there. Funding for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, including the very small number who access the specialist resourced provision, is also used effectively. This is having a positive impact on these pupils' learning.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted effectively. Pupils have a good understanding of a range of social and moral issues and enjoy raising money for charity. They also develop a good awareness of fundamental British values, such as showing respect for other people's beliefs and the importance of democracy. Older pupils were able to name their local member of parliament as well as identifying other leaders who had been elected, such as the president of the United States.
- Leaders have put in place robust arrangements for managing teachers' performance, ensuring that staff are appropriately focused on outcomes for pupils. Teachers and other staff appreciate the access that they have to different professional development

opportunities. Staff development led in school by the leader responsible for teaching and learning has been particularly successful in moving the quality of teaching forward, although leaders recognise that further work is needed to eliminate any remaining inconsistencies.

- The local authority and diocese have provided the school with effective support and challenge and are confident that the school has improved considerably since the previous inspection. The school also works in a collaborative cluster with other local schools, which allows staff to share and benefit from examples of good practice.

Governance of the school

- Governors have played an important role in the school's journey of improvement since its last inspection, and share senior leaders' vision for Vicarage Park to continue to move forward. The governing body itself has improved in effectiveness, and governors regularly attend training sessions in order to further develop their skills and knowledge.
- Governors have a clear understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses and have become increasingly effective in challenging school leaders and holding them to account for the school's performance. Minutes of governing body meetings confirm that governors ask challenging questions and are becoming skilled in using and interpreting performance data.
- Governors have made sure that there are suitable procedures in place for managing staff performance and that these are applied effectively, so that decisions they make about pay progression are fair and well informed. They also make sure that the school's finances are well used and have a good understanding of how effectively school leaders use additional funding, such as the pupil premium and primary school PE and sport funding.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- School leaders have been successful in creating a strong safeguarding culture across the school. Staff and governors receive regular training to ensure that their knowledge and understanding of good practice in safeguarding are up to date. Staff know the procedures to follow if they are worried about a child's welfare, and leaders ensure that any such concerns are followed up diligently. Effective links have been made with external professionals to ensure that vulnerable pupils are well supported.
- Comprehensive checks are made on staff, governors and regular visitors to school to ensure that they are suitable people to work with children. The school maintains detailed, high-quality records of these checks.
- Leaders have put systems in place to ensure that the school building and grounds are secure during the school day and when used by different groups outside of school hours. This is typical of the school's rigorous approach to safeguarding.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- The quality of teaching across the school is good overall, and is especially effective in Years 5 and 6, where the school's assessment information confirms that pupils make particularly strong progress. Teachers typically have good subject knowledge, which they use to provide pupils with clear explanations and instructions. A major strength of the school are the warm, positive relationships that exist between staff and pupils. These help to ensure that behaviour in lessons is consistently good, and so very little learning time is wasted in lessons.
- Reading is taught well throughout the school, and pupils develop a love of books and enjoyment of reading. Older pupils particularly like having the chance to select books from the school's well-stocked library. Younger pupils respond well to the teaching of phonics, learning how to use their phonic knowledge to tackle any unfamiliar words they come across. Teachers skilfully select quality texts that link with work in other areas of the curriculum, and this furthers pupils' engagement with reading.
- Teachers develop pupils' writing skills effectively, enabling pupils to become confident writers. They enjoy writing in a range of styles and for different purposes, including writing stories, descriptions and poems, and producing historical recounts and writing about experiments in science. Teachers encourage pupils to try out adventurous vocabulary and make sure that they use a range of punctuation with increasing, age-appropriate accuracy.
- Teaching assistants make a valuable contribution to pupils' learning, both when working individually with a pupil or when leading a small, focused group. Their support for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, including those who access the specialist resourced provision, is especially effective. This ensures that these pupils make typically good progress from their different starting points. This demonstrates effective use of the school's additional funding for special educational needs.
- Leaders have overhauled the school's approach to teaching mathematics in order to deliver the requirements of the updated curriculum more effectively. These changes are beginning to bear fruit. Pupils learn to work confidently with numbers before applying their knowledge and skills to problem-solving tasks. However, while most pupils are making secure progress in mathematics, not enough of the most able pupils are making the rapid progress of which they are capable. This is because not all teachers have consistently high enough expectations of what the most able pupils can do in mathematics and so sometimes set work that is too easy. Teachers also too often expect most-able pupils to complete initial tasks that lack challenge, and this limits the time they have to tackle work that better stretches their thinking.
- While the overall quality of teaching across the school has improved and is now good, some inconsistencies remain. Not all teaching has the same precise focus or urgency to push pupils' learning forward as is evident where practice is most effective. Where this is the case, pupils' progress is not as swift.

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Relationships between pupils and staff are warm and positive and pupils said that staff look after them well. Pupils like the clear systems that are in place to deal with any instances of poor behaviour, but said that these are few and far between, as behaviour in the school is typically good.
- Pupils are also aware of different types of bullying, including racism and cyber-bullying, but said that bullying is rare in their school.
- Pupils said that they feel safe in school and understand how to keep themselves safe in different situations outside school, including road safety and staying safe when using the internet. Pupils have a good understanding of key rules about e-safety, such as knowing not to give out personal information online. School leaders take sensible precautions to ensure that the large school site provides pupils with a safe learning environment.
- Pupils enjoy taking on positions of responsibility in school, such as being a member of the school council or a sports leader. School council elections give pupils first-hand experience of the democratic process, and those pupils who are elected work hard to help organise events, including raising money for the charity of their choice.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils are consistently polite and friendly. They happily welcome visitors to the school, and are keen to talk about the things that they particularly enjoy about life at Vicarage Park. Pupils are clearly proud of their school, as can be seen from the care they take to look smart in their new school uniform.
- Pupils' conduct around school is good and they move around the building sensibly, taking care not to disturb other people's learning. They enjoy breaktimes and make good use of a wide range of playground equipment, playing together enthusiastically.
- Pupils across the school demonstrate positive attitudes to learning. They respond quickly to teachers' instructions and settle down to work with the minimum of fuss. Pupils listen well to each other's ideas and opinions and are confident when answering teachers' questions.
- Attendance rates are typically better and rates of persistent absence are lower than the national average, indicating that pupils enjoy coming to school. This is confirmed by the overwhelming majority of parents. Almost all of the parents who responded to the 'Parent View' survey confirmed that their children are happy at the school.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Pupils' achievement has improved since the previous inspection and most now make good progress during their time at Vicarage Park. As a result, by the time they leave Year 6 they are well prepared to move on to the next stage of their education.
- Provisional data for 2017 shows that an above-average proportion of pupils reached the standard expected for their age by the end of key stage 2 in reading and writing, while the proportion reaching the expected standard in mathematics was broadly average. The rate of pupils' progress in reading was above the 2016 national average, while in writing and mathematics it was in line with that of other schools.
- There is a similar picture in key stage 1, where provisional results show that pupils' attainment in 2017 was in line with the previous year's national average in reading and writing, and slightly above that level in mathematics.
- The school's internal tracking information and inspection evidence confirmed that the pupils currently at the school are typically making good progress in reading, writing and mathematics across almost all year groups. Progress is particularly strong in the upper half of key stage 2. Pupils also achieve well in a range of other subjects, as can be seen in their understanding of scientific experiments and written work linked to topics in history and geography.
- There is a low proportion of disadvantaged pupils across the school, and in some year groups there is only a very small number of disadvantaged pupils. Because of these small numbers, the performance of disadvantaged pupils fluctuates between cohorts. However, evidence shows that disadvantaged pupils typically make good progress in their learning from their differing starting points when compared with other pupils in the school and nationally.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress from their different starting points. These pupils benefit from well-planned, targeted support that helps them to learn well and regularly reach their individual targets.
- There are inconsistencies in outcomes for the most able pupils in school. Over time, too few pupils in key stage 1 have been working at greater depth by the time they leave Year 2, although there are promising signs of improvement in 2017. There was also an increase in the proportion of pupils reaching the higher levels in reading and writing by the time they left Year 6 in 2017, but the proportion achieving similarly well in mathematics remained stubbornly lower.

Early years provision

Good

- Children enter the Reception class with levels of skills and understanding that are broadly typical for their age in most areas of learning, although many children's communication and language skills are often less secure. Children make good progress in their time in the Reception class, and the majority achieve a good level of development by the time they leave the early years and so are well prepared for the move into Year 1. A number of children make particularly strong progress to exceed the early learning goals in many areas of learning.
- The early years leader is knowledgeable and enthusiastic. She has ensured that the

quality of provision has improved since the previous inspection. This is particularly evident in the quality and organisation of the learning environment, both indoors and outside. The outside space provides children with an attractive area in which to learn and play. Children confidently work together on activities such as building dens and exploring the texture of different types of fruit in the outdoor kitchen.

- Teaching in the early years is good. Staff assess children's learning and progress well and use their records to identify individual children's learning needs. These aspects of children's learning are then targeted through further adult-led activities and additional challenges that children are able to access themselves.
- Behaviour in the early years is good. Children settle in well to the routines of the Reception class and quickly develop positive relationships with each other and with their teachers. Staff ensure that the learning environment is safe and that all statutory welfare requirements are met.
- Parents are encouraged to get involved in children's learning, for example, through attending parental workshops. Parents who spoke with inspectors were positive about their initial experiences of the early years. One parent said, 'The settling in process has been seamless, and my daughter runs into school happily. I couldn't have asked for a better start.'
- Leaders are determined to continue to improve the impact of provision in the early years and are particularly aware of the need to accelerate children's progress in writing. Positive steps have already been taken, and children clearly enjoy having the chance to write in different areas, such as by taking 'orders' on a clipboard in the 'café area'.

School details

Unique reference number	112269
Local authority	Cumbria
Inspection number	10036762

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	194
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Tracey Aplin
Headteacher	Julie Brookes
Telephone number	01539735442
Website	www.vicarageparkschool.org.uk
Email address	head@vicaragepark.cumbria.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	11 November 2015

Information about this school

- Vicarage Park is smaller than the average-size primary school.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils is below average, as is the proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is above average. The school offers specialist resourced provision for up to six pupils, although at the time of the inspection not all of these places had been taken up.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for achievement in Year 6.
- In the early years, children in the Reception class attend on a full-time basis.
- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- There have been significant staffing changes since the previous inspection. The current headteacher joined the school in September 2016.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching and learning across the school. They also looked at pupils' work in books, records of children's learning in the early years and other information about pupils' attainment and progress.
- Inspectors listened to pupils read and held discussions with a group of pupils. They also talked informally with pupils around the school.
- Inspectors considered the 42 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, and talked informally with parents at the start of the school day.
- Inspectors met a group of governors, including the chair of the governing body. They had discussions with staff in school, including the leader responsible for the provision for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, the leader for the early years and the leaders for English and mathematics. Inspectors also took account of six responses to Ofsted's staff survey.
- Inspectors met with representatives of the local authority and the diocese.
- Inspectors examined a range of documents. These included information about pupils' attainment and progress, the school's reviews of its own performance and governing body meeting records. They also examined safeguarding documentation and various records of pupils' attendance and behaviour.

Inspection team

Neil Dixon, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Julie Bather

Ofsted Inspector

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In the report, 'disadvantaged pupils' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route. www.gov.uk/pupil-premium-information-for-schools-and-alternative-provision-settings.

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