

Inspection of a good school: St George's CofE School

School Street, Barrow-in-Furness, Cumbria LA14 2JN

Inspection dates:

10–11 December 2019

Outcome

St George's CofE School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

St George's is a friendly and welcoming school. Pupils are happy here. They develop firm friendships. The school provides a warm, nurturing environment for pupils. Leaders have high expectations of what pupils can achieve, academically and personally.

Relationships between staff and pupils are rooted in mutual respect and trust. Pupils work hard in lessons, even when they find something difficult. Staff have high expectations of behaviour. Pupils meet these expectations. The pupils that I spoke to were adamant that bullying is rare, and that staff take swift action should it occur. Staff ensure that pupils know right from wrong.

Pupils spoke about the opportunities provided to broaden their experiences. They enjoy the wide variety of clubs, trips and residential experiences on offer. Staff celebrate the faiths and cultures of all members of their community. Pupils learn how to respect the rights of others. They take on many roles, including reading buddies, play leaders and school councillors.

Parents and carers are very pleased with the strong relationships that the headteacher has developed with his team members. Pupils enjoy sharing their learning with their parents through regular showcase events.

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

Children achieve well in the early years. Adults work together as a team to provide a curriculum that is well planned and sequenced to meet children's needs. Teachers give priority to developing children's early language skills. Staff are enthusiastic and foster children's enjoyment of learning. The children enjoy and show interest in the well-designed activities. For example, during the inspection, children enjoyed creating a shopping list for the Christmas party. Children learned how to sound out and spell words such as: list, cost, cakes and balloons.

Building on the work in early years, leaders have researched what it takes to make learning effective. They have used their knowledge of the Barrow area to help design a curriculum that is tailored to the pupils at this school. In subjects such as science, geography and history, teachers have mapped out the knowledge and skills that pupils will need to acquire and remember. The curriculum is less developed in other subjects, such as music and design and technology. This stops pupils from knowing more and remembering more as they move through the school. Leaders have clear plans in place to address this, with further training for staff already scheduled. Leaders have these intended changes planned out at a sensible pace to make sure that they do not cause unnecessary workloads for staff.

The teaching of early reading has a high priority from when children join the school in the early years. Staff who teach phonics are confident in this area. They appreciate the frequent and ongoing training they receive. Pupils have lots of opportunities to revisit and repeat the sounds that they are learning. The books that they read are matched to the sounds that they know. This helps pupils at key stage 1 to read with increasing confidence and fluency.

Recently, leaders have changed their approach to the teaching of reading at key stage 2. This is because there was a dip in pupils' attainment at the end of Year 6 in 2019. Reading is now at the heart of the curriculum and helps pupils to learn well in all subjects. Pupils read for pleasure in the school library. Teachers are passionate about reading. They read to pupils each day. Most pupils are now reading fluently and with understanding. Leaders are adapting the curriculum to ensure that the weakest readers achieve their potential.

The mathematics curriculum ensures that pupils gain the knowledge to become successful mathematicians. Teachers plan new learning effectively. They always consider what pupils already know and then give them time to practise new mathematical ideas. This supports pupils' speed and accuracy, especially when they are calculating. Pupils enjoy working out mathematical problems.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities receive effective support. Teachers adapt their teaching to meet the wide range of needs in their classes. Staff work well with other professionals to set and review appropriate targets for pupils.

Leaders ensure that the curriculum goes beyond the classroom. Pupils enjoy the many trips and visitors to the school that bring their learning alive. They appreciate the opportunities to learn about other cultures and how different people lived in the past. Year 6 pupils told me about their study of crime and punishment in the times of the Romans and Victorians. They reflected on how this learning helped them to understand what being a good citizen means. Pupils understand why it is important to show respect for others. They are keen to learn. Their positive behaviour supports their learning.

Parents are partners in their children's learning. During the inspection, a large number of parents were present and enjoyed the children's nativity.

Staff at all levels enjoy working in this school. They appreciate the way that leaders take steps to support their well-being.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders pay close attention to pupils' safety. They work with staff to raise awareness of pupils' welfare. Good systems are in place to help pupils and families, particularly when they are facing challenging times. Leaders follow up any concerns quickly. The school keeps detailed and well-organised records relating to safeguarding concerns. All staff have completed the required safeguarding training. The safeguarding team has good links with other professionals to support pupils' welfare. Leaders check the suitability of adults working at school. Governors work with leaders to check that safeguarding arrangements are effective.

Leaders teach pupils about keeping themselves safe. Pupils have a strong understanding of the risks they face online and how to manage these. For example, pupils know not to share their personal details.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Leaders and teachers have developed effective plans in many areas of the curriculum, including science, history and geography. In other subjects, particularly music and design and technology, curriculum plans are not as well established. This sometimes stops pupils from achieving as well as they could in all subjects. Leaders need to make sure that staff are given the support, time and training necessary to embed these new plans, so that they know what to teach pupils and when this should happen.
- Leaders have prioritised early reading. This is having a positive impact on the standard of reading in the school. Leaders should build on this strength and improve the curriculum for the weakest readers at key stage 2. Leaders should ensure that all staff are well trained in order to ensure that all pupils become successful readers.

Background

When we have judged a school to be good, we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains good. This is called a section 8 inspection of a good school or non-exempt outstanding school. We do not give graded judgements on a section 8 inspection. However, if we find some evidence that the school could now be better than good or that standards may be declining, then the next inspection will be a section 5 inspection. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the section 8 inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will convert the section 8 inspection to a section 5 inspection immediately.

This is the first section 8 inspection since we judged St George's CofE School to be good on 14 December 2014.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use Ofsted Parent View information when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

If you are not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

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.

School details

Unique reference number	112289
Local authority	Cumbria
Inspection number	10058011
Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	2 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	271
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Eric Rogers
Headteacher	Steven Herbert
Website	www.stgeorges.cumbria.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	14 December 2014

Information about this school

- The proportion of pupils who join and leave the school at various points during the academic year is above the national average.
- The school's most recent section 48 inspection was conducted by the Diocese of Carlisle in November 2015.

Information about this inspection

- During this inspection, I met with the headteacher and the senior leaders.
- I held meetings with teachers, support staff and subject leaders. I met with six members of the governing body and held a meeting with a representative of the local authority.
- I spoke to pupils about behaviour and expectations in the school, and observed behaviour around the school and in lessons.
- I reviewed the school's self-evaluation and improvement plans, minutes of governing body meetings and information on the school's website. I examined records in relation to safeguarding.

- I considered the 26 responses to Parent View, Ofsted’s online questionnaire, and the 28 free-text responses. I spoke to parents at the start of the school day.
- As part of this inspection, I looked carefully at phonics and reading in all classes. I also focused on mathematics and history. During these activities, I met with subject leaders and visited lessons. I also spoke with teachers and pupils. I viewed examples of pupils’ books and listened to pupils read.

Inspection team

Andrew Morley, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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