

# Ambleside CofE Primary School

Vicarage Road, Ambleside, Cumbria LA22 9DH

## Inspection dates

12–13 September 2018

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>Good</b>
Effectiveness of leadership and management	<b>Outstanding</b>
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	<b>Good</b>
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	<b>Good</b>
Outcomes for pupils	<b>Good</b>
Early years provision	<b>Outstanding</b>
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Not previously inspected

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a good school

- The combined drive and determination of the school's trust, local governing body and headteacher have led to considerable school improvement, particularly over the past 18 months.
- When the school opened as an academy, the quality of teaching was poor. The achievement some pupils made in some classes was weak. Teaching and the achievement of current pupils are now good and pupils are flourishing. However, the legacy of this poor teaching is still having an impact on the published school results, particularly in mathematics and on the outcomes of the most able in mathematics.
- Pupils feel very secure in the school. They are happy and almost all talk enthusiastically about their experiences. Teachers have a full and deep understanding of the needs of every pupil and so can ensure that pupils are safe, healthy and prosper.
- Teachers carefully consider the curriculum that their pupils follow. Teachers adapt topics to incorporate the local environment, history and culture. This helps pupils learn well and enjoy school. While the mathematics curriculum covers most of the subject well, pupils are given insufficient opportunities to solve problems with mathematics or apply their mathematics understanding in practical situations.
- All staff have followed the headteacher's example in developing excellent relationships with parents. Parents find all staff very approachable and responsive when they raise concerns.
- At the last inspection, provision in the early years setting was stronger than in the rest of the school. Since then excellent leadership has led to rapid improvement. Children love learning and they do so quickly. Both indoor and outdoor environments are bright, stimulating and full of interesting resources. The leader makes sure that all staff know how to help children progress very well and teaching is excellent. The positive and caring culture ensures that children are happy and safe.
- Pupils are very familiar with the school's core values. These provide a framework to promote pupils' spiritual, moral and social development. This aspect is one of the many highlights of this school.
- Despite a significant drive to improve attendance, it is not good enough. A large proportion of pupils attend very well. However, there is a small number of pupils who have extended absences.

## **Full report**

### **What does the school need to do to improve further?**

- Work with parents even more closely to improve pupils' attendance.
- Continue to improve the teaching of mathematics, ensuring that:
  - pupils' achievement is consistently strong across all aspects of the mathematics curriculum
  - the most able pupils excel.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management

### Outstanding

- After a difficult and turbulent start to the academy, senior leaders began to resolve underlying issues that were leading to weak teaching and achievement. The multi-academy trust and the headteacher initiated early improvement. With the trust's support and guidance, governors were able to develop their roles and increase the impact they had on improving the school. In addition, the trust was able to take on many administrative responsibilities, freeing the governors to concentrate on improving the school. This established a secure foundation for improvement.
- Initially, the very capable headteacher had to ensure that the school functioned efficiently while improving the quality of teaching throughout key stages 1 and 2. Over time, she managed this very successfully and was then able to develop leadership qualities in a wide range of staff. High-quality leadership is now evident at all levels. Improvements to procedures and practice are providing long-term and sustained improvements in teaching, learning and behaviour.
- Current staff who were employed by the predecessor school at its final inspection say that this school is very much better. Older pupils, too, comment on how their experiences have improved.
- Staff talk of a team approach to improving the school and this is evident in the way all staff go about their work. The headteacher has systematically developed the capacity of other staff to make significant contributions to whole-school improvement. She now delegates significant responsibilities to a wide range of teachers and teaching assistants. Leaders at all levels adopt a similar approach to school improvement. They objectively evaluate the effect of any change on pupils' learning. They lead discussion about improvements, often involving pupils and parents. Staff have the confidence to try a wide range of strategies. They always evaluate the impact of their changes, measuring success against improvement for pupils. All staff know accurately how well the school is performing, occasionally underestimating the impact they are having on improving the school.
- The headteacher is highly skilled in evaluating the quality of teaching based on the impact it has on pupils' achievement. Staff say that they value her guidance and support. The headteacher has shared her skills of monitoring with two other staff, so now a culture of mutual support and guidance is developing. All teachers can describe valuable training they have received. Some training events have focused on whole-school developments while others have met the specific needs of teachers. Teachers voiced their appreciation of the supportive development they have received, including professional development that has enabled them to gain valuable leadership skills.
- Teachers and leaders constantly review the school's curriculum and will adapt it if they believe they can make improvements. An excellent example of this was improving the way reading was taught throughout the school. Pupils' work in science, art, geography and history is of a very high quality. Teachers adapt the curriculum to improve pupils' engagement with their learning. They extend pupils' skills in English while learning about topics in geography and history. Teachers base as much learning as they can on the local environment, most particularly on the local mountains and rivers. The area's

culture is celebrated in the school.

- The promotion of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is at the heart of this school. Staff believe that without this, pupils would not learn as well as they do. It also provides an excellent foundation for their future lives in modern Britain. Indeed, pupils' personal development is very strong. Staff make a great effort to provide pupils with an extensive range of rich experiences from within their classrooms to around the local area and beyond. There are weekly clubs, including fitness, sports and music. Pupils raise money for local and international charities. They visit festivals and take part in inter-school competitions. Pupils entertain members of the local 'Evergreen Club'. They develop an appreciation of local culture, including the work of Wordsworth and Cumberland and Westmorland wrestling. Singing events feature frequently throughout the school year. Leaders undertake an annual review of this work. They identify improvements and make changes.
- The leader with responsibility for the effective use of the school's PE and sports premium identifies a strong impact of spending on pupils' health and well-being. She maintains a record of the participation of every pupil in the school. This enables her to review the provision, evaluate and adapt it to provide further opportunities for pupils who would benefit. The school promotes participation in a wide range of sports. This fund is used very effectively.
- The school makes very good use of all additional funding it receives. Despite minimal additional funding for disadvantaged pupils, because they are so few, these pupils thrive. Pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities progress well. As with all pupils, staff know these pupils' needs and abilities in detail. Staff tailor work and support precisely, so pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities learn as quickly as others.
- School leaders work closely with a local charitable trust. They make excellent use of any additional resources this brings, which has in the past provided the school with a field, additional playground space and IT equipment.
- The headteacher has developed excellent systems of communication with parents. In their text responses, many parents mentioned this as a key feature of the school. They feel all staff, governors and the headteacher are approachable. Many also complimented the school on the support they have received to help them work in partnership with the school, helping their child learn and develop. Parents' comments to the inspector about the work of the school were entirely positive.
- In a survey of staff views conducted as part of the inspection, all staff who responded answered positively to all questions about the quality of leadership, education and behaviour.

## **Governance of the school**

- Governors have a very clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities. They frequently review their combined skills and seek training or support for aspects they consider to be not as strong as others. Governors have developed their skills quickly and have made a substantial impact on the improvement of the school.
- Governors have high expectations of what the school can achieve. They ask good

questions of the headteacher, challenging her to explain how well the school is performing. This high level of challenge, with very good governor support of the school, makes a considerable contribution to this quickly improving school.

- All governors are dedicated to providing a school of real quality for the town of Ambleside and its surrounds.
- Governors enjoy getting involved with the life of the school and help in classes and at events and are heavily involved in the promotion of the school in the community. They are familiar faces around the town and, like other leaders, are very approachable.

## Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Dedicated staff and governors ensure that all pupils are safe, happy and healthy. Staff make a point of building very positive relationships between themselves and pupils. They encourage pupils to talk about their emotions. Pupils quickly begin to trust staff and say that they will confide in them if they have any concerns about themselves or, indeed, other pupils. Staff, too, discuss what they see and hear with each other. Safeguarding training is of good quality, up to date and frequent. All staff know with confidence when and with whom they should raise concerns about the safety or welfare of a pupil.
- The designated member of staff for leading safeguarding manages procedures and processes very well. Record-keeping is detailed and informative. There are good systems in place to ensure that actions, including those undertaken by other agencies, are completed effectively and on time.
- The headteacher is resolute in ensuring that children cannot go missing from education. If a pupil leaves to join another school, she will check that the pupil starts to attend. If a pupil leaves without a school to go to or leaves the country, she will report the circumstances promptly to the appropriate authority. The headteacher will always seek reassurance that when a pupil is absent for more than a very short time, or going on a family holiday, they will be safely looked after.

## Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

**Good**

- Many activities combine pupils from two or all classes. Teachers read to classes other than their own once a week. Not only do these changes add variety to the pupils' experience, they enable teachers to get to know all pupils in the school very well. Teachers' knowledge of pupils' strengths, weaknesses and personalities is a crucial element in ensuring that teachers provide learning activities that are highly suitable, matching pupils' interests and meeting their needs.
- Teachers carefully consider the topics they prepare. Pupils say that lessons are fun. Teachers tap into pupils' interests and give them a wide range of experiences, from whole-school events to taking lessons in the neighbouring park or school garden. An evaluation of the work completed by pupils across key stages shows that providing this diverse range of experiences has contributed to very effective learning.
- Teaching assistants play a very important role in providing high-quality education

across the school. They are highly skilled and work independently with groups of pupils and occasionally whole classes. Teachers manage this work very well and ensure that pupils of all abilities work with teachers and skilled teaching assistants alike. Volunteers also play a vital part in the school. Many give up time to listening to pupils reading and help individual pupils in a variety of other ways. Staff also seek the support of visitors who can provide specialist knowledge, again adding to the variety of pupils' experiences.

- The headteacher and teachers identified that reading was not being taught effectively enough. This led to teachers working together to research what needed attention and how improvements could be achieved. Teachers' strategies included better use of questions to help pupils understand inference, extend their vocabulary, explain their points of view, predict what will happen next in a story and summarise texts. The school adopted a reader scheme. Teachers worked closely with parents, helping them to support their children read better. Teachers publish guidance in their regular newsletters. Key stage 2 pupils maintain a reading journal where they record their reading and their thoughts about the books that they read. Teachers organise visits to the town library and pupils listen to talented storytellers. Teachers have successfully promoted in the pupils a love of reading. Since these changes, teachers' evaluations show a marked improvement in pupils' reading skills.
- Teachers have now turned their attention to improving the teaching of mathematics across the school further and are adopting the same improvement model that successfully improved the quality of pupils' reading.
- Teachers follow the school's policy on homework. Pupils' homework books show that they take this work very seriously and most take great pride in their homework. Teachers also follow the school's policy on marking and assessment.

## Personal development, behaviour and welfare

**Good**

### Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding.
- All staff and governors consider the promotion of pupils' personal development as being as important as their academic development. Leaders evaluate pupils' whole experience in and out of school. They look for opportunities to provide activities that will help pupils develop in ways they might otherwise not. For example, all pupils get opportunities to develop their leadership skills. Staff nurture pupils, guiding them and helping them to experience success. Pupils very successfully learn about themselves and systematically build their confidence.
- The promotion of pupils' physical and mental health is also high on all staff members' agenda. All pupils take part in the 'Monday mile', walking or running a mile within the playground. Older pupils help and encourage younger ones. Opportunities for physical activity and sport are extensive and include swimming, mixed hockey and outdoor pursuits. Pupils are encouraged to be reflective, to develop their opinions and their skills of expression. Through very good teaching, pupils have an excellent understanding of how to be safe in a diverse range of circumstances, including while online or in their communities. Pupils know they can raise concerns they may have with

staff. Staff can spot if a pupil appears to be acting slightly differently. Good physical health, trusting relationships and high levels of care all help promote pupils' mental health.

- School leaders and teachers inform pupils about bullying; what it is and the effect it can have. Consequently, pupils are able to talk in detail about bullying and its different forms. They know it can be verbal and it can be physical. They know it has to be repeated misbehaviour. Pupils say that incidents are rare and relatively minor because teachers respond effectively and quickly at the first sign of an incident. School records confirm the pupils' views.

## Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- The school's 'golden rules' provide a simple structure with which pupils learn how to behave. Pupils are courteous and respectful to each other and to adults. They are trustworthy. Pupils are calm when they move around the school and treat equipment and buildings with care. They have exuberant, but safe, fun at breaktimes. They have a good understanding of the beliefs of people who are not brought up within the Christian faith. Pupils are tolerant and understanding of people who have different backgrounds to themselves.
- In class, the vast majority work hard for almost all the lesson. Towards the end of a lesson, however, the attention of one or two can start to wander and teachers have to ensure that these pupils return to concentrate on their work. Pupils respond well to prompts. Pupils' books and other examples of work are very impressive and show very good attitudes to their learning.
- Staff and the headteacher manage the behaviour of pupils very well. Almost all pupils behave well and are happy in school. For a few, and occasionally, behaviour is not good. The school has highly effective systems to support these pupils learn how to manage their own behaviour. It is rare for pupils to misbehave over an extended period. In these circumstances, the school works very well in partnership with parents to help the pupil improve their behaviour. The school maintains useful records that enable them to monitor and appropriately report on behaviour.
- While most pupils attend regularly, there are a group of pupils who miss, on average, just over half a day's schooling per week. Leaders have tried an extensive range of strategies to improve the attendance of these pupils. This has included altering school holidays to enable the considerable number of families who are employed in the tourist industry, to take a family holiday outside their peak work time. However, this did not have a significant impact, mainly due to these holidays being out of line with other schools, particularly the local secondary schools. Success is emerging. Last year, the attendance of about a third of pupils who were not attending regularly improved with intensive support and encouragement from the headteacher and other agencies. Attendance of pupils is the only aspect of the school that is not improving rapidly.
- All pupils start the school day and lessons promptly.

**Outcomes for pupils**

**Good**

- Numbers of pupils in each year group are relatively small and so any analysis of published government accountability measures must be treated with caution. However, results in 2018 showed weak progress for Year 6 in mathematics when compared with a positive outcome for English. An evaluation of the work of these pupils while they were in Year 6 reveals that they made strong progress in mathematics over the year. Information the school has on mathematics progress for this class shows that they progressed well while in Year 5. However, their progress in Year 4 was very poor and the school cannot be confident about the accuracy of information gathered over three years ago and the end of this class's Year 3. Despite good progress in Years 5 and 6 it was not enough to compensate for previous lack of progress. Teachers overcome the poor start in English and helped pupils to catch up on the learning they had missed.
- The progress that Year 6 pupils made in English last year was good despite weak teaching earlier in their key stage 2. Improvements in teaching had a more rapid impact on achievement in English than on mathematics. So teachers were able to help pupils catch up on learning they had missed.
- Pupils' achievement has been improving over recent years across all subjects and year groups. Pupils' skills in writing have been firmly established for some time. The progress that current pupils make in writing is good. Leaders had been concerned that pupils' skills in reading were not as strong. However, they were able to initiate improvements that have resulted in rapid improvements in reading. The quality of reading throughout the school is now good.
- While most aspects of the mathematics curriculum are now taught well, pupils get insufficient opportunities to apply their mathematical skills to solve problems. This is limiting pupils' ability to confidently use mathematics and to extend their skills and understanding beyond what is being taught. Although pupils of all abilities are affected by this, it is having a greater impact on the achievement of the most able pupils.
- Leaders and teachers have developed all other areas of the curriculum very well across all year groups. They know how to engage their pupils so learning becomes fun. Pupils achieve well in all subjects, and particularly in science, art, geography and history.
- Very good phonics teaching starts in early years and it continues throughout key stage 1. This enables pupils to grasp the fundamentals of reading and writing early and they go on, in key stage 1, to attain standards that are typical or better for their age. The improvements seen in teaching mathematics are also evident in key stage 1 and pupils progress well.
- The increasing number of pupils attending the school who speak English as an additional language progress even more strongly, from their starting points, than other pupils in the school. This is achieved initially through high-quality pastoral support and the freely given care and friendship from other pupils. These pupils settle into the school very quickly. Their skills in speaking English develop rapidly and they are then able to learn across the curriculum, making very strong progress.
- As pupils prepare to move to their secondary schools, they are confident and enthusiastic learners. They have reached at least good standards in all subjects, including English and mathematics. They behave well and are principled in their approach to life. They are articulate and socialise well. Those who attend regularly are



very well prepared for their next steps in education.

## Early years provision

## Outstanding

- When the school converted to an academy, early years was stronger than in other parts of the school. The leader of early years has a very clear vision of what high-quality provision is like and has worked tirelessly and skilfully to drive considerable improvement over the last three years.
- To children, both the indoor and outdoor environments are thrilling places, full of intriguing toys, lots of exciting equipment, colours and sounds. These vibrant and stimulating areas have been carefully developed to ensure that children have oodles of fun while learning very quickly.
- The quality of teaching is excellent. The early years lead teacher has considerable expertise in assessing children's development. Staff observe children closely and quickly get to know children's talents, interests and characteristics. This deep knowledge and understanding of individual children enables all staff to match a very broad range of activities accurately to children's abilities and interests. Staff manage learning very subtly, so children see no difference between playing and learning.
- Parents are delighted with the quality of education that their children experience in the early years. They say that they find all staff welcoming and very supportive. Parents describe how staff work with them in partnership, helping children to develop quickly. Communications between the early years staff and parents are excellent, they are efficient and highly informative.
- Children are looked after very well. All staff provide the highest level of care. Their detailed knowledge of the children enables all staff to spot when a child is not themselves and may need extra attention or support. Procedures and routines to ensure that children are safe are highly effective and encourage very good behaviour.
- Children's development when they start in early years is broadly typical for their age. However, literacy and numeracy development can be weaker depending on the intake. All children, from their wide range of starting points, make excellent progress.
- By the end of Reception, children are very well prepared to move on to Year 1. They are confident, have well-established routines that help learning and they love learning. For their age, children have strong literacy and numeracy skills and communicate well. Teachers ensure that children are very familiar with the key stage 1 environment well before they make their permanent move there.

## School details

Unique reference number	141978
Local authority	Cumbria
Inspection number	10053418

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Sponsored converter
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	95
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Ruth Porter
Headteacher	Sarah Carrick
Telephone number	01539 432181
Website	<a href="http://www.ambleside.cumbria.sch.uk">www.ambleside.cumbria.sch.uk</a>
Email address	<a href="mailto:admin@ambleside.cumbria.sch.uk">admin@ambleside.cumbria.sch.uk</a>
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

## Information about this school

- Ambleside CofE Primary School converted to become an academy school on 1 October 2015. When its predecessor school was last inspected by Ofsted it was judged to be inadequate.
- The school is part of The Good Shepherd multi-academy trust.
- The headteacher took up post after the inspection of the predecessor school and before its conversion to an academy.
- The school serves Ambleside and surrounding communities. The tourist industry dominates the local economy. The proportion of pupils in the school who speak English as an additional language is increasing.
- Due to its religious character, in June of 2015, the school underwent an inspection under section 48 of the relevant education act. The purpose of the inspection was to evaluate the distinctiveness and effectiveness of the school as a church school.

## Information about this inspection

- The inspector held meetings with the headteacher and other leaders and managers. The inspector met with six members of the governing body, one of whom holds the position of chair. He met with two representatives of the multi-academy trust.
- The inspector talked to pupils during their break and lunchtimes and listened to some pupils read.
- The inspector met with three teachers separately.
- School documents were scrutinised, including: safeguarding checks, information about pupils' achievement and records of checks on the quality of teaching.
- The inspector considered school evaluation reports written by representatives of a range of external groups.
- With the headteacher, the inspector visited classrooms to speak with pupils, look at their books and observe their learning.
- The headteacher and other senior leaders were party to many of the inspection activities.
- The inspector received 22 comments from parents sent by text. He also spoke to five parents as they brought their children to school. The inspector took account of 10 staff responses to an inspection survey of their views.

## Inspection team

Neil Mackenzie, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

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