

Inspection of a good school: Askam Village School

Lots Road, Askam-in-Furness, Cumbria, LA16 7DA

Inspection dates: 8 and 9 June 2021

Outcome

Askam Village School continues to be a good school.

However, inspectors have some concerns that one or more areas may be declining, as set out below.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are happy to come to school and they are cared for well by staff. The pupils who spoke with inspectors said that they feel safe in school. They value the caring atmosphere that leaders have created. For instance, older pupils are keen to help younger pupils to settle into school and make friends. Pupils consider their teachers to be friendly, supportive and fun.

Many pupils appreciate the opportunity to be involved in singing events, sports clubs, and competitions. Staff are keen to nurture, develop and celebrate pupils' talents. The school's trophy cabinet is a testament to this.

Pupils behave well, both in lessons and during social times. This is because their teachers have high expectations. Pupils are confident that incidents of bullying will be dealt with appropriately by staff.

Pupils who struggle the most with their reading are given additional support. However, there are inconsistencies in how effectively staff help pupils to catch up. This is because some staff have not received sufficient training in how to deliver the phonics and early reading curriculum effectively. Moreover, some subject leaders have not fully developed their subject expertise to design curriculums that support teachers to deliver learning well.

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

Leaders are at different stages of designing and rolling out well-ordered and suitably ambitious curriculum plans. Leaders' curriculum plans in music and physical education support teachers to deliver these subjects well. This is because it is clear what pupils need to know and when they need to learn it. This helps teachers to design learning that builds

on what pupils know already. Curriculum plans in some other subjects remain in the very early stages of development. Some subject leaders have been unable to develop their subject expertise to design a well-planned and coherent curriculum. In addition, some teachers have been unable to benefit from advice and guidance to deliver more ambitious subject curriculums effectively. This means that there are times when teachers do not design learning that helps pupils to know and remember more.

In mathematics, leaders have ensured that teachers have adopted a consistent approach to delivering the curriculum. This ensures that staff are clear about what to teach pupils and when. Pupils benefit from being able to practise recalling important number facts, such as multiplication tables and methods of calculation. However, some staff do not design learning that helps pupils to make links between methods and problem-solving. This stops pupils from deepening their learning over time.

Leaders have promoted a love of reading effectively. Many older pupils enjoy reading books by a range of authors. Leaders have recently introduced a rewards system to encourage pupils to read more widely at home. Staff ensure that the youngest pupils, including children in the early years, can practise their phonics knowledge daily. Teachers are quick to identify those pupils who have fallen behind with reading. These pupils receive additional help from staff. That said, leaders have placed insufficient focus on making sure that the staff who provide this help have benefited from appropriate training. Some staff explained to inspectors that they had not had sufficient training to support those younger pupils who struggle the most with reading to catch up.

Pupils, including children in the early years, behave well and demonstrate positive attitudes to their learning. For example, the three-year-olds who started Nursery Year this term have settled very well into routines. Classrooms are places where children and pupils can learn. Pupils' enjoyment of school is reflected in their high rates of attendance. Staff know and understand the individual needs of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. This ensures that this group of pupils receive appropriate support.

Prior to the COVID-19 (coronavirus) pandemic, pupils took part in a wide range of experiences to support their wider development and broaden their horizons. For example, many pupils entered a range of sporting activities in which many of them excelled. While residential trips for older pupils are currently on hold, in the past staff have planned these trips thoughtfully to meet the needs of pupils. For example, staff plan visits for pupils with the aim of widening their experiences and broadening their understanding of different communities.

Members of the governing body have provided appropriate support for senior leaders. However, governors have not maintained a sufficient oversight of leaders' actions to improve and develop the curriculum since the previous inspection. Staff said that both senior leaders and governors are mindful of their workload. Staff reported that, during the pandemic, they believe that leaders listened to them and have remained considerate of their well-being. All staff who responded to the staff survey said that they are proud to work at this school.

In discussion with the headteacher, we agreed that the teaching of reading may usefully

serve as a focus for the next inspection.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders have ensured that appropriate systems are in place to make sure that the adults who work in the school are suitable to work with children and pupils. Leaders provide regular and relevant training for staff. This means that staff know what to do if they have concerns about a pupil. Leaders work closely with a wide range of professionals to ensure that pupils and their families get the help that they need.

Leaders ensure that pupils learn to keep themselves safe. For example, pupils learn about how to stay safe near the sea.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Some staff have not had sufficient training to deliver the early reading and phonics curriculum effectively. This means that those pupils who struggle the most in reading do not gain the knowledge that they need to catch up quickly enough and become confident and fluent readers. Leaders must ensure that staff have the necessary training to deliver the phonics curriculum effectively and support those pupils who have fallen behind in reading.
- Some subject leaders are still in the process of learning how to design a well-structured and well-sequenced curriculum. In some subjects, this work is in its very early stages. This means that teachers struggle to plan learning that builds on what pupils know and can do already. Leaders must ensure that subject leaders are provided with appropriate support to design coherent curriculums from early years through to Year 6 so that pupils know and remember more.

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 or outstanding school. We do not give graded judgements on a section 8 inspection. However, if we find some evidence that a good 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 the school to be good on 14 and 15 June 2016.

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 the school and 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 [here](#).

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	112409
Local authority	Cumbria
Inspection number	10195042
Type of school	Primary
School category	Foundation
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	171
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	John Thompson
Headteacher	Fiona Newton
Website	https://askamvillageschool.co.uk/
Date of previous inspection	14 – 15 June 2016, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- Since the previous inspection, a new chair of the governing body has been appointed.

Information about this inspection

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- During this inspection, inspectors met with the headteacher. The lead inspector spoke on the telephone with the chair of the governing body and a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors did 'deep dives' in these subjects: reading, mathematics, and history. As part of each deep dive, inspectors met with subject leaders; met with groups of pupils; reviewed pupils' work; met with a group of teachers and visited a sample of lessons.
- To inspect safeguarding, inspectors reviewed a range of documents, met with the designated safeguarding lead, and reviewed the leaders' checks on the suitability of adults to work at the school.
- Inspectors spoke with parents and carers and considered the 61 responses to Ofsted's

online questionnaire, Parent View, including 61 responses to Ofsted's free-text facility.

- Inspectors also reviewed the 10 responses to Ofsted's staff questionnaire. There were no responses to Ofsted's questionnaire for pupils.

Inspection team

Naomi Taylor, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Michael Hewlett

Ofsted Inspector

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