

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

Westnewton, Wigton, Cumbria CA7 3NT

Inspection date: 25 January 2022

Outcome

There has been no change to this school's overall judgement of good as a result of this initial (section 8) inspection. However, the evidence gathered suggests that the inspection grade might not be as high if a full inspection were carried out now. The next inspection will therefore be a full (section 5) inspection.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils enjoy coming to school. They feel safe, knowing that teachers care for them and listen to any concerns. Pupils are keen to take on responsibilities in school. They complete a formal application and interview process for posts including 'shed manager' and 'line-up monitor'. These give them some useful insights into future adult life.

Pupils' achievement, including that of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), is variable. Teachers' expectations of pupils' work in some subjects are not high enough. Pupils do not learn and remember as much as they should.

Pupils know that they are expected to behave sensibly. Most pupils listen and follow instructions well. Pupils said that teachers are fair. They said that they are confident that adults will deal with any incidents of bullying effectively.

Pupils enjoy taking part in a range of clubs and visiting interesting places, such as museums, cinemas and places of worship. Pupils are active in the local community. For example, they planted spring bulbs in the village, take part in church festivals and helped to set up a food bank during the COVID-19 pandemic restrictions.

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

Leaders have not thought through what they expect pupils to learn in all areas of the curriculum. Subject leaders are new to their roles. Some do not have the expertise to design a curriculum that builds on pupils' learning over time. Teachers do not routinely check and ensure that pupils are learning and remembering the curriculum in the right order. Consequently, pupils' progress is variable. For example, in French, history and geography, pupils' written work shows little evidence of them improving their knowledge and understanding from one year to the next.

Leaders' curriculum thinking is more precise in some other subjects. For instance, in mathematics, teachers ensure that pupils build their learning in a logical order. Pupils develop quick recall of number bonds and multiplication facts, and gain confidence in applying these skills to problem-solving.

Leaders make learning to read a top priority for the school. Teachers read to pupils often. They encourage pupils to read for pleasure from a broad range of books. Children begin learning phonics in the Reception class and, by the end of Year 2, most pupils are competent readers. However, some pupils in Years 1 and 2 struggle to become fluent readers. This is because the books teachers give them to practise reading are too difficult.

Children joining the early years become part of the school family quickly. Adults are kind and welcoming. They help children to develop confidence and independence as they play and learn together. Pupils generally behave well, and show respect for one another and staff in the school. There is sometimes some silly and noisy behaviour in key stage 1, which interrupts pupils' learning. Pupils in key stage 2 behave more sensibly, and most complete their work without any fuss.

Accurate, early identification of pupils with SEND leads to effective support for these pupils' needs as they move through the school. Teachers give these pupils the support that they need to learn the same curriculum as their peers. Pupils with SEND take part in all aspects of school life.

Leaders ensure that pupils have many opportunities to broaden their experiences through taking part in activities outside of school. Pupils enjoy sports, story and arts clubs after school. Leaders arranged exciting activities to support pupils in coming back to school following the COVID-19 lockdowns. These included fell-walking in the Lake District and a whole-school trip to a cinema. Pupils learn about different faiths, cultures and traditions, visiting places of worship and celebrating religious festivals in school. These experiences support pupils well in preparing them for life in modern Britain.

Governors are supportive. They know the school and its community well. Governors and leaders take into consideration the staff's workload, well-being and work-life balance when making decisions. Staff feel respected and valued in school.

In discussion with the headteacher, the inspectors agreed that the development of the school's curriculum in relation to French, history and geography may usefully serve as a focus for the next inspection.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders and governors ensure that there are robust arrangements to keep pupils and staff safe. All staff understand that safeguarding is everyone's responsibility. Staff know what to do and who to contact if they suspect that a pupil may be at risk of harm. Staff have regular and up-to-date training, including in safeguarding. They know that it is important to recognise early signs that a pupil may be at risk.

Pupils learn how to be safe, including when online. They know that they must always tell an adult if they come across something inappropriate. They are aware of potential dangers if using social media.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Some subject leaders do not have the necessary expertise to design and implement a curriculum that is effective enough to enable pupils to build their knowledge systematically. This means that pupils do not gain sufficient depth of knowledge to be well prepared for the next stage in education. Leaders should ensure that subject leaders receive training to enable them to design an ambitious curriculum across the full range of subjects. Subject leaders should support teachers in delivering carefully sequenced learning, so as to extend pupils' long-term knowledge and understanding.
- Some pupils in key stage 1 do not learn to read fluently, and this limits their ability to progress through other areas of the curriculum. Leaders should ensure that the books these pupils use to practise reading are well matched to their knowledge in phonics, so that they can read more fluently and with greater understanding.

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, because it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on a section 8 inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, 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 deem the section 8 inspection as a section 5 inspection immediately.

This is the first section 8 inspection since we judged the school to be good in November 2016.

How can I feedback 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 information from Ofsted Parent View 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.

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	112308
Local authority	Cumbria
Inspection number	10210993
Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	58
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chairs of governing body	Ann Chester Mark Renwick
Headteacher	Helen Harrison
Website	www.stmatthews.cumbria.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	1 and 2 November 2016, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school does not use any alternative provision.
- The school is a Church of England school. The most recent section 48 inspection took place in January 2017.

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 leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- During this inspection, the inspectors met with the headteacher and six members of the governing body.
- The inspectors held a telephone conversation with a representative of the local authority.
- The inspectors reviewed a range of safeguarding documents, including the single central record of checks on the suitability of staff to work with pupils. The inspectors

met with the designated safeguarding leader, and checked how leaders record and respond to safeguarding concerns.

- The inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics and French. For each deep dive, the inspectors met with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. Inspectors also looked at pupils' work in some other subjects, and spoke to leaders about it.
- The inspectors observed pupils reading to a familiar adult.
- The inspectors spoke with staff about their workload and well-being.
- Inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted Parent View, including free-text comments. They also considered responses to the staff and pupil surveys.

Inspection team

Jan Corlett, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Nick Capron

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