

Inspection of Cumberland School

Rivington Lane, Rivington, Bolton, Lancashire BL6 7RX

Inspection dates: 18 to 20 January 2022

Overall effectiveness **Good**

The quality of education **Good**

Behaviour and attitudes **Good**

Personal development **Good**

Leadership and management **Good**

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection Good

Does the school meet the independent school standards? **Yes**

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils leave the school well prepared for their next steps. They achieve well, both academically and personally, due to leaders' high expectations for them. Leaders ensure that all pupils benefit from the carefully planned curriculum, which meets their individual needs.

Pupils enjoy school. They receive a friendly welcome from caring staff as they arrive at school each day. New pupils adapt quickly to school life. They make friends and settle into new routines.

Pupils feel safe and cared for. This is because pupils' well-being is given the highest priority by staff. Pupils know that their teachers are ready to listen and to help them with any concerns that they may have.

Pupils enjoy exercising and relaxing in the spacious outdoor sports and garden areas. They appreciate daily time to socialise, play football and visit the sensory garden and quiet areas. Pupils develop confidence and resilience through regular outdoor learning activities, such as sailing and climbing.

Pupils are well supported by staff to manage their behaviour and show respect for others. Should bullying arise, pupils are confident that staff will deal with incidents quickly and effectively.

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

The proprietor body, leaders and staff share an ambition for all pupils to succeed. Warm and caring relationships between staff and pupils ensure that pupils feel ready to learn.

Leaders make full use of the school buildings and grounds to support pupils' learning and well-being. Classrooms and learning areas are bright, attractive and well resourced. Leaders give careful thought to the vocational provision for older pupils. For example, the school's new key stage 4 campus includes a learning area for those pupils studying construction or mechanics.

Leaders have designed a broad and engaging curriculum. Subject leaders have used their expertise to identify the most important knowledge that pupils should learn. The curriculum thinking for both key stage 3 and 4 pupils is precise. Leaders have ensured that pupils build their knowledge in a logical way. For example, in computing, pupils learn about online safety in well-ordered steps. This means that pupils grow in confidence and deepen their learning. However, the curriculum is not as precise for pupils with significant gaps in their learning. For example, leaders have not considered in detail what essential reading, writing and mathematical knowledge pupils need in order to access the key stage 3 curriculum with confidence.

Pupils at the school have a range of special educational needs and/or disabilities. A team of therapists work closely with staff to identify pupils' individual social, emotional and learning needs. These are addressed through a carefully planned programme of support for each pupil. This support enables most pupils to access the school's curriculum with success.

Leaders have ensured that pupils' enjoyment of reading takes a high priority. Staff are imaginative in planning opportunities to encourage pupils to read for pleasure. Teachers share a wide range of interesting books and texts with pupils. Reading areas are well stocked and attractive. Pupils understand the importance of reading. As one pupil said, 'it helps you get on in life'. Most pupils read with fluency and understanding. Leaders have taken recent steps to improve the reading curriculum for those pupils who need additional support with phonics. They have purchased additional texts which are matched to pupils' phonics knowledge. Leaders are in the process of providing phonics training for staff.

Across the curriculum, teachers use assessment strategies successfully to check that pupils have learned the intended curriculum. In lessons, staff provide appropriate and thoughtful support to help pupils to keep up in all subjects.

Leaders ensure that staff are skilled in managing pupils' behaviour. Staff intervene in incidents of misbehaviour in a calm, caring and supportive way. This means that pupils can return to their learning quickly. Staff help pupils to understand how their actions affect others around them. They provide pupils with the support that they need to improve their behaviour.

The school's curriculum is carefully planned to support pupils' personal development. For example, pupils find out about different cultures and religions. They learn that all are equal. Pupils have many opportunities to be active and caring citizens. They take pride in being peer mentors and school councillors. They are also active in supporting charities such as the local food bank.

Pupils benefit from detailed careers advice. Leaders provide useful support to help pupils with their career aspirations. Pupils typically move on to a range of college and training settings of their choice.

Parents and carers have a positive view of the school. A typical comment was, 'the school goes above and beyond'. Parents appreciate the efforts that leaders make to share information about their children's well-being and academic achievement.

Leaders are very considerate of staff workload when making decisions. Staff appreciate the support that leaders provide to support their well-being. They enjoy working at the school.

The proprietor body has a detailed understanding of the independent school standards. They fulfil their statutory duties and ensure that the school is a safe place where all are treated equally and with respect. Policies, including the school's safeguarding policy, are available to parents on the schools' website. Leaders have

also ensured that a suitable plan is in place, which outlines how pupils with a disability are able to take part fully in the school's curriculum.

The proprietor body has the knowledge, skills and understanding to ensure that pupils in the proposed new age range will make good progress and achieve well, should the proposed change to the age range be granted.

The proprietor body has ensured that the curriculum policy includes the relevant information relating to the proposed change in the school's age range. They have put in place detailed schemes of work for this proposed material change. These detailed schemes of work contain sufficient detail about the teaching of technological, human, aesthetic and creative subjects.

The proprietor body intends to use the school's current assessment policy and procedures for the proposed key stage 2 pupils. The format that leaders use to report pupils' achievement to parents is suitable for the proposed new age range.

The proprietor body intends to apply the school's current behaviour policy should the changes be approved. The new staff that leaders intend to employ will receive training in behaviour management in line with this policy.

The proprietor body has suitable plans in place for the development of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. These plans have been suitably adapted to meet the different ages and development of pupils should the proposed changes be approved.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders ensure that all staff have regular and detailed safeguarding training. This means that staff are very alert to possible signs of abuse. They report any concerns to leaders.

Leaders follow the latest government guidance, when dealing with any safeguarding concerns. They work closely with external agencies to protect pupils. Leaders ensure that pupils get comprehensive support from the school's pastoral team and therapists.

Through the curriculum, pupils find out about a range of situations which may lead to harm. For example, pupils learn about the dangers of knife crime. Pupils know that they should share any concerns with a trusted adult.

What does the school need to do to improve? (Information for the school and proprietor)

- The curriculum thinking for pupils at an early stage of learning lacks detail. Leaders have not considered the precise knowledge that they intend these pupils to learn in order to be fully prepared for their future learning. Subject leaders should consider the important knowledge that these pupils need to learn in order to be fully prepared for the school's key stage 3 curriculum and beyond.

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

School details

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| Unique reference number | 135541 |
| DfE registration number | 888/6104 |
| Local authority | Lancashire |
| Inspection number | 10217075 |
| Type of school | Other independent special school |
| School category | Independent school |
| Age range of pupils | 11 to 18 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number of pupils on the school roll | 61 |
| Number of part-time pupils | 0 |
| Proprietor | The Witherslack Group |
| Chair | Stephen Bacon |
| Headteacher | Christopher Newiss |
| Annual fees (day pupils) | £63,372 - £87,621 |
| Telephone number | 01204 324 446 |
| Website | www.witherslackgroup.co.uk/our-locations/our-schools/cumberland-school |
| Email address | cumberland@witherslackgroup.co.uk |
| Date of previous inspection | 26 to 28 June 2018 |

Information about this school

- A new headteacher and two new deputy headteachers have been appointed since the previous inspection.
- The school has opened a new key stage 4 campus since the previous inspection.
- The school uses two alternative providers, both of which are unregistered.

Information about this inspection

Inspectors carried out this inspection under section 109(1) and (2) of the Education and Skills Act 2008. The purpose of the inspection is to advise the Secretary of State for Education about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

The school meets the independent school standards. These are the requirements set out in the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014.

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with school leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, mathematics, art and design and personal, social, health and economic education. For each deep dive, inspectors met with subject leaders, looked at curriculum plans, 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 curriculum plans and spoke to leaders about some other subjects.
- During the inspection, inspectors spoke with pupils about school life. They spoke with the headteacher, deputy headteachers, pastoral leads, the school's family liaison officer, members of staff and members of the proprietor body. They also met with the school's special educational needs coordinator and members of the school's therapy team.
- Inspectors considered responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire. They spoke with a parent and a carer by telephone. They also considered the responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire for staff.
- During the inspection, inspectors reviewed a range of documentation including that in relation to safeguarding and information relating to the independent school standards. They looked at records of pupils' behaviour and attendance.
- Inspectors checked the school premises at each site.

The school's proposed change to the age range of pupils

The school has applied to the Department for Education (DfE) to make a 'material change' to its registration. At the DfE's request, we checked whether the school is

likely to meet the relevant independent school standards if the DfE decides to approve the change. This part of the inspection was carried out under section 162(4) of the Education Act 2002.

- The outcome of this part of the inspection is: the school is likely to meet the relevant independent school standards if the material change relating to the school provision is implemented.

Information about the material change inspection

- Inspectors scrutinised the school's curriculum plans relating to the proposed change to the age range of pupils.

Inspection team

Elizabeth Stevens, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Julie Bather

Ofsted Inspector

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