

Inspection of a good school: Kirkby Stephen Primary School

Nateby Road, Kirkby Stephen, Cumbria CA17 4AE

Inspection dates: 13 and 14 July 2022

Outcome

Kirkby Stephen Primary School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils, and children in the early years, enjoy attending this school. They describe the school community as being like a family that is welcoming and friendly. Pupils feel safe and are confident that they have an adult to talk to about any worries. Older pupils often take opportunities to play with children in the early years at lunch and break times. They enjoy the responsibilities teachers give them to organise parts of school life.

Pupils understand leaders' high expectations of them. Pupils said that teachers' expectations of their behaviour increase as they get older. This helps pupils become more accountable and independent. Pupils and children behave well in lessons and around school. They are kind to each other and work together well on shared activities. Pupils said that bullying is rare, but if it does happen, teachers sort it out quickly. Pupils and children understand the school routines and follow them well.

Pupils enjoy the 'nine standards challenge' that increases in difficulty as they move through the year groups. The challenges help pupils to master a range of wider life skills. This helps them to prepare for the next step in their learning and development.

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

Leaders have created an ambitious and well-thought-out curriculum. They have worked hard to create a curriculum which is engaging for pupils and that makes links to different subjects. The curriculum builds on pupils' knowledge well, from early years through to Year 6. Staff have a collaborative and reflective approach to curriculum development. They constantly review the opportunities for pupils to learn. Leaders' high aspirations for all pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), help pupils to achieve well.

Leaders are quick to identify pupils who may have SEND. Staff are well trained in a range of techniques to support pupils with SEND. Leaders have prioritised training for staff to ensure that they can deliver the curriculum to meet the needs of all pupils. Staff have

strong subject knowledge. Leaders have introduced some effective assessment strategies, but these are not used consistently well across all subjects.

Leaders have fostered a strong love of both reading and mathematics in children and pupils. Children and pupils enjoy reading a diverse range of books. They also have a passion for problem-solving. Phonics teaching starts as soon as children join early years. The phonics curriculum is also a priority in key stage 1, and most pupils progress quickly through the curriculum. Children and pupils in key stage 1 are well supported to catch up well in early reading. At times, the reading books for pupils in key stage 2 who find reading difficult do not match the sounds that they are learning. These pupils can become frustrated with their reading, and their progress slows.

Pupils' behaviour is exemplary in lessons, at breaktime and at lunchtime. Children and pupils play well together and plan their own games and activities. They share resources well, including children in the early years, who can take turns. School routines are clear. Children and pupils follow them well. Pupils can focus on their learning as disruption to their lessons is rare. Leaders have built diversity into the curriculum so that children and pupils learn about difference and tolerance.

Pupils' wider personal development is a strength at this school. Leaders acted quickly following the COVID-19 pandemic to reinstate a wide range of trips and visits. This has included several visitors into school from the local community, linked to the curriculum in each year group. For example, a group who have climbed Everest visited Year 6 when they were studying their 'mountain' topic. Similarly, the Nursery class visited a range of local businesses when learning about 'people who help us'. Children and pupils access a wide range of activities, such as chess club, sports club, outdoor club and art club.

Governors and leaders understand what is required for the school to continue to improve. They have a clear vision of the place of the school in the community. Leaders consider staff well-being and workload when introducing new initiatives.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

There is an effective system in place to identify any potential concerns for children and pupils. All staff are well trained to identify any emerging needs that pupils might have. Leaders liaise with appropriate agencies to support families to access services when needed.

Leaders are very aware of the local risks for their children and pupils. They are vigilant in ensuring that their educational opportunities cover key risk areas, such as road safety and water safety, due to the proximity of busy roads and the river. Pupils are very knowledgeable about how to keep themselves safe online and in risky situations.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Some pupils who find reading more difficult in key stage 2 do not always read books that match the sounds they are learning. This means that some pupils struggle to decode words and to read fluently. Leaders should ensure that struggling readers in key stage 2 read books which are closely matched to the sounds that they know.
- In a small minority of subjects, assessment strategies are not used effectively. This means that, occasionally, there are gaps in pupils' learning which are not identified by teachers. Leaders must ensure that there are effective assessment strategies in place across the curriculum, so that pupils' learning builds on what they already know.

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 second section 8 inspection since we judged the school to be good in June 2017.

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 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	112180
Local authority	Cumbria
Inspection number	10226259
Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	248
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Elizabeth Paisley
Headteacher	Alison Capstick
Website	www.kspcs-cumbria.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	9 May 2017, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The headteacher and chair of governors are new in post since the last inspection.

Information about this inspection

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

- This was the first routine inspection that the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The inspector discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and has taken that into account in her evaluation of the school.
- As part of this inspection, the inspector carried out deep dives in the following subjects: mathematics, reading and history. For each deep dive, the inspector discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited some lessons, spoke with children and pupils, spoke with teachers and looked at samples of children's and pupils' work. The inspector also looked at samples of work from other subjects
- The inspector met with the headteacher, other senior leaders, the special educational needs team, subject leaders and teachers. The inspector also spoke with a representative from the local authority.

- The inspector met with the chair of the governing body and other governors. She also considered the minutes of several governors' meetings.
- The inspector checked safeguarding procedures, including the recruitment checks made on staff. She met with the designated safeguarding leader, staff, children and pupils to discuss wider aspects of safeguarding. The inspector scrutinised a range of documentation in relation to safeguarding. She also considered survey responses from staff, parents and carers, children and pupils around safeguarding.
- The inspector considered a range of documentation, including that relating to the curriculum, improvement plans and leaders' self-evaluation summary.
- The inspector observed children's and pupils' behaviour in a range of situations, including in corridors, at breaktimes, at lunchtimes and in lessons. She also spoke to pupils about behaviour and bullying.
- The inspector spoke with pupils about their programme of wider personal development.
- The inspector considered the responses from parents to Ofsted Parent View. This included the comments submitted via the free-text facility.
- The inspector also considered the responses to Ofsted's pupil survey and staff survey.

Inspection team

Elaine Mawson, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

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