

Inspection of a good school: Lowca Community School

Lowca, Whitehaven, Cumbria CA28 6QS

Inspection date: 14 July 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 this small, friendly school. They play happily in their extensive grounds overlooking the sea. Children in the early years settle quickly at the start of each day because they feel safe and secure. Pupils said that everyone is welcome here, no matter what their differences are.

Leaders and staff expect pupils to succeed in school. Pupils usually try hard in lessons. However, in some subjects, pupils do not achieve as well as they should. This is because the curriculums in these subjects are not fully developed. On occasions, some pupils lose focus on their work because the activities that adults have provided do not help them to learn well.

Pupils typically behave well in school. This reflects leaders' high expectations. Pupils show respect to their teachers and move around school sensibly and calmly. They enjoy the extra time for play that they receive as a reward for good behaviour. Pupils feel safe and know whom to talk to if ever they are worried. They are confident that their teachers deal effectively with any bullying should it ever occur.

Pupils enjoy a range of trips and visits to support their learning. For example, they visit Roman remains to learn about history. Older pupils learn about responsibility when they help to look after younger ones in the playground. Trips to local secondary schools help pupils in Year 6 to feel ready for high school when the time comes.

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

Leaders have designed an ambitious curriculum that covers a broad range of subjects from the early years to Year 6. They have considered what they most want pupils to know by the end of each year group and by the time that they leave Lowca Community School.

In some subjects, the curriculums are well thought through. Teachers know exactly what important knowledge pupils need to learn and the order in which they need to learn this content. Pupils learn securely and typically achieve well in these subjects. This includes pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND).

The curriculums in other subjects are less well organised. This prevents teachers from making sure that pupils learn all of the important knowledge that they need, including those in the early years. Pupils achieve less well in these subjects.

Teachers check regularly to identify any pupils at risk of falling behind in their learning. They provide extra support to help them to catch up quickly. Teachers typically correct any misconceptions that pupils may have. However, at times, in some subjects, the activities that teachers provide do not help pupils to understand new knowledge. When this happens, pupils' knowledge is less secure.

Some curriculum leaders have had limited training to help them to carry out their roles. This hampers their ability to provide other teachers with the support and guidance that they need to deliver the curriculum well.

Reading has a high priority in the curriculum. Children begin to learn about phonics as soon as they start Reception class. They continue to build up their knowledge of letters and sounds as they move into key stage 1. Adults make sure that pupils read books that contain the letters and sounds that they know. This develops pupils' confidence in reading. Pupils, including those with SEND, learn to read well. Children and older pupils develop a love of reading. Leaders ensure that there is a wide range of books for pupils to read. These books support pupils' learning across the curriculum.

Leaders and staff work together to identify any pupils who might have SEND. They work effectively with professionals, such as speech and language therapists and psychologists, to ensure that pupils with SEND receive timely support. Pupils with SEND participate in all aspects of school life and achieve similarly to other pupils. However, they are subject to the same weaknesses in the curriculum as their classmates.

Pupils attend school regularly and arrive on time. Most listen carefully to their teachers and do not disturb others by chatting in class. On occasions, some younger pupils lose concentration and find it difficult to get on with their work quietly. This is because they do not understand the learning that adults have provided.

Leaders work with local employers to enrich opportunities for pupils' wider development. For example, pupils take part in a careers fair to help them to learn more about the world of work. Pupils engage in scientific activities with professionals from the energy industry. They have opportunities to stay away from home on their residential visits to outdoor education centres. These experiences help to prepare pupils for future life.

Governors ask leaders a range of challenging questions about their work to improve the school. They are considerate of staff's workload in the decisions that they make. Staff said that they appreciate leaders' care for their well-being.

In discussion with the headteacher, the inspectors agreed that history, geography, modern foreign languages and religious education may usefully serve as a focus for the next inspection.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders make sure that staff receive regular safeguarding training. This helps staff to recognise when a pupil might be at risk from harm. Staff know how to report any concerns that they might have about a pupil's welfare.

Leaders communicate effectively with other professionals, such as early help and family support services. This enables them to ensure that pupils and families receive prompt help if they need it.

Pupils learn how to keep themselves safe when they use the internet. For example, they learn not to share personal information and to let an adult know if ever they see anything that makes them feel uncomfortable.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In some subjects, the curriculums do not contain enough information about the smaller building blocks of knowledge that pupils need to learn, or the order in which they need to learn this knowledge. This prevents teachers from being able to make sure that pupils learn everything they need to know in these subjects. Leaders must ensure that there is enough information for teachers about the most important learning for pupils so that they can ensure pupils' learning builds up logically and securely.
- Subject leaders have had limited training to enable them to carry out their roles. This limits their ability to support teachers to deliver the curriculum effectively, including in the early years. Leaders must ensure that subject leaders receive appropriate training to enable them to provide guidance and support for teachers to deliver the curriculum as intended, so that pupils learn well across all subjects.
- In some subjects, the activities that teachers choose to deliver the curriculum do not support pupils to learn well. Leaders must ensure that all staff have the expertise in each subject to provide learning activities that support pupils to build up their knowledge securely, so that they know more and remember more over time.

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 February 2012.

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	112158
Local authority	Cumbria
Inspection number	10211237
Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	60
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Maryam Zakari
Headteacher	Joanne Crawford
Website	www.lowca.cumbria.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	19 January 2017, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- Since the last inspection, a new chair of the governing body has been appointed.
- Leaders do not make use of any alternative provision.

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.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher and other leaders. The lead inspector spoke to the chair of the governing body on the telephone. The lead inspector also spoke with two representatives of the local authority.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics and art and design. For each deep dive, inspectors met with subject leaders, discussed the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors also discussed the curriculum in some other subjects with leaders.

- Inspectors reviewed a range of documentation about safeguarding. Inspectors also spoke with staff to understand how they keep pupils safe.
- Inspectors considered the views expressed by parents in their responses to Ofsted Parent View. This included free-text comments.
- Inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted’s online surveys for staff and for pupils. Inspectors also spoke with some pupils about school life.
- Inspectors spoke with staff to discuss leaders’ support for their workload and well-being.

Inspection team

Mavis Smith, lead inspector

Her Majesty’s Inspector

Sally Timmons

Her Majesty’s Inspector

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