

Inspection of a good school: Samuel King's School

Church Road, Alston, Cumbria CA9 3QU

Inspection dates:

5 and 6 July 2022

Outcome

Samuel King's School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils enjoy attending this small, welcoming school. Pupils and staff describe the school as being like a family. Pupils said that they feel happy and safe. They appreciate the strong, positive relationships that they forge with staff. This helps pupils to trust their teachers.

Pupils celebrate differences between people. Pupils are taught by staff to not tolerate discrimination or bullying. Pupils are confident that leaders would act to address any incidents of bullying quickly, should these happen.

Pupils behave sensibly and have fun during social times. Lunchtimes are calm and orderly. Pupils enjoy each other's company. They are respectful to each other and to staff.

Leaders' expectations for pupils' learning and behaviour are high. Pupils live up to these expectations and achieve well across a range of subjects. They enjoy their learning without distraction from others.

Pupils value the opportunities that staff provide outside of lessons. These activities broaden pupils' horizons and deepen their understanding of the world. For example, pupils take part in a range of visits, sports, music and drama clubs. They are keen to contribute to their local community through fundraising events. For instance, pupils raised funds for a local air ambulance.

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

Leaders and governors have put in place a broad, balanced and interesting curriculum. This enables pupils to be successful in their learning. Leaders have strengthened the curriculum so that pupils' learning builds logically on what they already know. Leaders have shown determination in broadening the range of subjects that they offer to pupils. The curriculum has the English Baccalaureate suite of subjects at its heart.

In each subject, curriculums are well organised. Subject leaders have thought carefully about the knowledge that pupils should learn and the order in which it should be taught. Teachers have strong subject knowledge. In most subjects, they use their subject expertise well to help pupils remember and use the essential knowledge that they have been taught.

Teachers select appropriate activities to enable pupils to revisit, practise and consolidate what they already know. This means that most pupils use their learning in increasingly sophisticated ways, for example to make links across subjects and to solve problems. However, in a few subjects, some pupils are less secure in their learning. Teachers sometimes do not design activities that develop and strengthen pupils' learning in these subjects. This means that pupils sometimes lack the secure knowledge needed to explain what they have learned.

Teachers make regular checks and use skilful questioning to see how well pupils are remembering important learning. They adapt learning successfully to ensure that pupils' misconceptions are addressed.

Teachers identify the needs of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) accurately. They provide effective support so that these pupils can learn the same ambitious curriculum as other pupils in the school. Pupils with SEND achieve well. They are fully included in the life of the school.

Leaders have effective systems in place to identify and help those pupils who find reading difficult. Pupils develop as confident and fluent readers. They read for pleasure.

Pupils behave well during lessons. Low-level disruption in lessons is rare. This is because pupils learn to regulate their own behaviour and conduct themselves well.

Leaders provide a range of opportunities to develop pupils' personal development. As a result, pupils are well prepared for life in modern Britain. For example, pupils learn about other cultures and events, such as the Chinese New Year. Leaders ensure that useful careers guidance for pupils takes place in all year groups.

Pupils have a strong input into the life of the school and the local community. For example, older pupils met with a local MP to discuss transport issues in the area. They succeeded in gaining funding for pupils to attend a local sixth-form college to continue their education.

Governors are successful in holding leaders to account for the quality of education in the school. Leaders and governors are supportive of reducing teachers' workload. They ensure that staff are well cared for. Staff are very positive about the school and feel valued. They are proud to work at Samuel King's School.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

There is a strong culture of safeguarding at the school. Staff know pupils well. They are vigilant and alert to the signs that may indicate that pupils are at risk of harm. Adults report concerns about pupils in a timely manner, and leaders follow up on these concerns appropriately. Leaders work effectively with external partners to ensure that pupils and their families get the help that they need.

Pupils learn how to keep themselves safe. This includes when pupils are online. They learn about healthy relationships and consent.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In some subjects, teachers do not provide pupils with enough opportunities to revisit and practise their learning. This means that their learning is not embedded. Leaders should ensure that teachers provide appropriate activities to enable pupils to strengthen their learning.

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 March 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	112378
Local authority	Cumbria
Inspection number	10212503
Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Foundation
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	88
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Natalie Hewett
Headteacher	Gill Jackson
Website	www.alstonmoorfederation.org.uk
Dates of previous inspection	14 and 15 March 2017, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- A new headteacher was appointed in September 2021.
- A new chair of governors was appointed in September 2021.
- No pupils currently attend 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 held meetings with governors and a local authority representative.
- Inspectors also met with the headteacher, other senior leaders, subject leaders and the special educational needs coordinator.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in art and design, mathematics and business studies. They visited a sample of lessons in these subjects, discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, reviewed pupils' work and held discussions with teachers and pupils.

- Inspectors spoke with pupils about their experiences of school and their views of behaviour and bullying. Inspectors also observed pupils' behaviour during lessons and at breaktimes.
- Inspectors reviewed a wide range of documentary evidence, including leaders' self-evaluation and improvement plans.
- An inspector looked at safeguarding policies and reviewed leaders' records of checks on the suitability of staff and governors. They met with the leaders who have overall responsibility for safeguarding. Inspectors spoke with staff and pupils about leaders' work to keep pupils safe.
- Inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted's online survey for staff and Ofsted's online survey for pupils.
- Inspectors also considered the responses to Ofsted Parent View. This included some free-text responses.
- Inspectors spoke to staff about their workload and well-being.

Inspection team

David Hampson, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Lindy Griffiths

Ofsted Inspector

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