

Inspection of a good school: St Columba's School

Church Lane, Walney Island, Barrow-in-Furness, Cumbria LA14 3AD

Inspection dates:

15 and 16 November 2022

Outcome

St Columba's School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils arrive at school happy and eager to learn. Children in the early years settle quickly. They enjoy exploring and learning together with their friends. Pupils thrive in the calm and nurturing environment that leaders and staff have created. Parents speak highly of the school and its place at the heart of this island community.

Pupils behave well and work hard in lessons. This helps them to achieve well in a range of subjects. Pupils feel safe in school. There is always someone to talk with if they have any worries or concerns. Pupils enjoy playtimes. Any falling out with their friends is resolved quickly by staff. Pupils are confident that should bullying occur, staff would act quickly to put a stop to it.

Pupils try hard to live up to the high expectations that staff have of them. Pupils are proud of the work that they do to raise funds for local charities. Pupils appreciate the many opportunities that leaders provide, such as trips to the theatre and working with local artists. Pupils develop their confidence and resilience as they challenge themselves to try new activities on residential trips. Pupils also enjoy the many clubs that they can join, including sports clubs and the popular lunchtime club.

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

Leaders have designed an ambitious curriculum which meets the needs of all pupils well, including pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Leaders have identified the key knowledge and vocabulary that they want pupils to learn from the early years to Year 6. The curriculum provides opportunity for pupils to practise what they are learning. Leaders have carefully ordered the content for individual subjects. This helps pupils to make links between subjects. Pupils use what they know when they are learning something new. Pupils' knowledge and understanding builds over time and pupils achieve well.

Leaders have ensured that staff have the knowledge and resources that they need to deliver the curriculum effectively. Staff benefit from supportive opportunities to work together and share ideas and expertise.

Teachers use a range of effective assessment strategies to check what pupils know and remember. This helps them to identify what pupils need to learn next. In most subjects, leaders know how well pupils achieve. However, in a few subjects, the completion of these checks has been hindered by situations due to the recent COVID-19 pandemic. In these subjects, leaders do not have a clear view of how well pupils are remembering the curriculum.

Accurate identification of pupils with SEND enables leaders to quickly provide the support that this group of pupils needs to be successful. Teachers provide a variety of resources and equipment for pupils with SEND to use. This helps these pupils to access all that the school has to offer. They learn effectively alongside their classmates.

Reading is at the very heart of the curriculum. In the Nursery Year, children join in enthusiastically with familiar songs and rhymes. In the Reception Year, children quickly learn the sounds that letters make. The books that they read closely match the sounds that they know. This helps pupils in key stage one to become confident, fluent readers. Pupils who are struggling with their reading, including those at the early stages of reading in key stage two, benefit from the help that they receive from skilled staff. Pupils read widely and often across a broad range of subjects. They talk passionately about the books that they have read. Older pupils eagerly recommend books that they have enjoyed to others.

Pupils are polite and well mannered. They conduct themselves well both at playtimes and when having their lunch. During lessons, pupils are able to focus on their work free from disruption.

Leaders provide pupils with opportunities beyond the academic curriculum that enhance pupils' personal development well, for example visitors to school and field trips in the local area. Pupils learn the importance of treating others with respect and understanding. Their developing knowledge of other faiths and cultures helps to prepare them well for life in modern Britain.

Governors use their knowledge effectively in order to hold leaders to account for the quality of education that they provide. Leaders are mindful of staff's workload. Staff appreciate the importance leaders place on their well-being and are proud to work at St Columba's School.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

The training staff receive enables them to quickly identify any changes in a pupil's

demeanour. Staff know the procedures to follow if they have any concerns about a pupil's welfare. Vulnerable pupils and their families receive the help and support that they need from skilled staff in school or from other agencies. Leaders work with charities, and a range of public services, to enhance pupils' understanding of how to keep themselves safe in a variety of situations. Pupils are taught how to use social media safely and how to report any situations that make them feel uncomfortable.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In a small number of subjects, leaders do not have a comprehensive understanding of how well pupils achieve. This hinders teachers when they are designing what pupils need to learn in these subjects. Leaders should ensure that assessment systems check pupils' knowledge and understanding effectively in all subjects.

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 an ungraded inspection, and it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on an ungraded inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection, which is carried out under section 5 of the Act. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the ungraded inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the ungraded inspection a graded inspection immediately.

This is the second ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good in June 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.

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	112364
Local authority	Cumbria
Inspection number	10240820
Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	196
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Peter Craig
Headteacher	Claire O'Donnell
Website	www.stcolumbas.cumbria.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	21 July 2017, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school does not currently use any alternative provision.
- The school had its most recent Section 48 inspection undertaken by the Diocese of Lancaster in October 2017.

Information about this inspection

- This was the first routine inspection since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The inspector discussed the impact of the pandemic with school leaders and staff and has taken that into account in the evaluation of the school.
- The inspector scrutinised a range of safeguarding documentation, including the single central record. She spoke with staff to check how well they understood their safeguarding responsibilities.
- During the inspection, the inspector spoke with representatives from the governing body. The inspector also spoke with the headteacher, members of the leadership team and staff.
- The inspector held separate meetings with representatives from the local authority and the diocese.

- The inspector reviewed a range of documentation relating to the curriculum. She carried out deep dives in these subjects: reading, mathematics and art and design. The inspector met with subject leaders, visited lessons and spoke to staff. She also spoke to pupils about their learning and their experience of the school. The inspector also looked at pupils' work and listened to pupils read.
- The inspector spoke with parents to gather their views about the school. The inspector considered the responses to Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text comments.
- The inspector spoke with staff to gather their views about their workload and well-being. She considered the responses to Ofsted's staff survey. The inspector also gathered the views of pupils during the inspection and considered the responses to Ofsted's pupil survey.

Inspection team

Amanda Stringer, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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