

Inspection of Kirkby Stephen Grammar School

Christian Head, Kirkby Stephen, Cumbria CA17 4HA

Inspection dates: 4 to 6 October 2022

Overall effectiveness

Inadequate

The quality of education

Requires improvement

Behaviour and attitudes

Good

Personal development

Good

Leadership and management

Inadequate

Sixth-form provision

Good

Previous inspection grade

Good

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils, and students in the sixth form, enjoy attending Kirkby Stephen Grammar School. They told inspectors that they are confident that any rare incidents of bullying are dealt with effectively by staff. Many pupils receive valuable support from staff. Teachers know pupils well. Pupils readily approach staff for help if they need it.

Pupils said that they feel safe in school. However, pupils at this school are not safe. This is because some pupils, including those who are vulnerable, do not get the support that they need in a timely enough manner to make sure that they are safe. Leaders have not made sure that safeguarding pupils is the absolute priority of all staff and governors. Leaders do not act quickly enough when staff pass on their concerns about pupils' safety. As a result, some pupils are at risk of potential harm.

Pupils typically behave well. Their behaviour in lessons and during social times reflects leaders' high expectations. Sixth-form students act as positive role models to younger pupils. For example, they take an active role in supporting pupils in key stage 4 with their learning and during their social times.

Leaders expect pupils and students to succeed. Pupils study many different subjects across the curriculum. However, in some subjects, they do not learn the essential knowledge that they need to be successful. This hampers their achievement.

Pupils benefit from a well-thought-out programme to promote their personal development. Many pupils excel at sport. They are proud to represent their school locally and at county level. Pupils enjoy taking part in school productions and fundraising for local charities. Sixth-form students regularly help out in the local community.

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

Leaders have high aspirations for pupils' future lives. This is particularly true for students in the sixth form. In the sixth form, the curriculum is well designed across many subjects. Teachers use their expertise to ensure that students learn all that they need to be ready for the next stages of their education, employment or training. Students in the sixth form achieve highly.

This is not replicated in key stages 3 and 4. This is because the curriculum is under development. In some subjects, leaders have thought carefully about the most important knowledge that pupils need to learn. Teachers use their expert subject knowledge to make sure that pupils have understood the essential knowledge that is necessary for them to tackle more complex work later on in their studies. Teachers are skilled in spotting misconceptions and addressing them quickly. Pupils regularly recall and revisit their prior learning successfully. This helps pupils to build a rich body of subject knowledge over time.

In other subjects, leaders are still in the process of finalising their curriculum thinking. This means that teachers lack the guidance that they need to know what pupils should learn and when this content should be taught. Some of the key stage 3 subject curriculums do not match the full breadth of the national curriculum. This means that pupils are not as well prepared as they should be for the demands of key stage 4. In these subjects, teachers' approaches to assessment mirror the developments in the curriculum. Some teachers do not identify pupils' gaps in learning as quickly as they should. This impedes how well pupils progress through the curriculum.

Leaders' work to encourage and inspire pupils to read for pleasure and as part of their academic studies is weak. In addition, leaders' strategy to support pupils who are not accomplished readers is in its infancy. While leaders have established systems to identify pupils who find reading difficult, a lack of expertise among the staff means that the support these pupils receive is not effective. This prevents pupils from becoming fluent and confident readers. It also hampers their access to the curriculum.

Leaders expect pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) to follow the same curriculum as their peers. Leaders successfully identify and assess the needs of pupils with SEND. Some staff support pupils with SEND well. However, some teachers do not use the helpful strategies that leaders have provided to help pupils with SEND to access the curriculum. This means that some pupils with SEND do not learn as well as they should.

Relationships between pupils and staff are strong. Leaders and teachers manage behaviour well. Pupils' and students' behaviour is positive. Pupils said that their learning is rarely interrupted by other pupils' poor behaviour.

Through the personal development curriculum, pupils and students gain the knowledge and skills that they need to lead healthy and fulfilling adult lives. Leaders are increasing the opportunities for pupils to learn about other faiths and cultures in more depth. Pupils enjoy learning about different careers and completing work experience. There are careers fairs in school so that pupils understand the range of post-16 options available to them. Almost all pupils, and students in the sixth form, go on to further study in education, employment or training.

Governors have provided some effective challenge to help leaders to improve the quality of education that pupils receive. However, they have been negligent in ensuring that they fulfil all of their statutory duties in relation to safeguarding. Governors and leaders have not ensured that their safeguarding systems and procedures are effective. They have failed to ensure that keeping pupils safe sits at the heart of everyone's work.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are not effective.

The culture of safeguarding is poor. This puts pupils' welfare and safety at risk. Staff are suitably trained to spot concerns about pupils. Staff routinely report these concerns to senior leaders. However, leaders either do not take effective action to address the reported concerns, or they do not do it in a timely manner.

Some vulnerable pupils do not receive the support that they need. Records of safeguarding concerns are incomplete. Safer recruitment procedures are not followed well enough. Members of the governing body do not have sufficient insight into their responsibilities for keeping pupils' safe, or enough oversight of the safeguarding arrangements in the school.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The culture of safeguarding is poor. This puts pupils' and students' welfare and safety at risk. Leaders and governors, as a matter of urgency, must improve the effectiveness of safeguarding arrangements, so that all pupils, including those who are vulnerable, receive effective and timely support to ensure that they are safe.
- Members of the governing body lack sufficient understanding of their roles and responsibilities in ensuring that pupils are safe. This means they are not fulfilling their statutory duties or providing suitable challenge and support to leaders in relation to safeguarding. Governors must ensure that they have the knowledge and expertise that they need to hold leaders to account for the safeguarding culture within the school.
- Leaders' work to promote a love of reading and to support pupils who are not accomplished readers is in its infancy. This limits pupils' desire to read for pleasure. It also prevents some pupils from becoming fluent and confident readers. Leaders should ensure that staff are suitably trained to support pupils who find reading difficult and to inspire pupils to read widely and often.
- Some pupils with SEND are not supported well enough by staff. This means that these pupils are unable to progress through the curriculum as well as they should. Leaders should ensure that teachers use the information that they hold about pupils with SEND more effectively to adapt how they deliver curriculum content.
- The curriculum in some subjects is under-developed. Subject leaders are in the process of clarifying exactly what will be taught. These curriculums lack the ambition of the national curriculum. This means that some pupils do not acquire sufficient knowledge to prepare them for their GCSE courses. Leaders should ensure that they identify the important knowledge that pupils must know and remember in these subjects.

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	137107
Local authority	Cumbria
Inspection number	10240149
Type of school	Secondary Comprehensive
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	350
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	65
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	John Weir
Headteacher	Gary Hartley
Website	www.ksgs.cumbria.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	12 and 13 September 2017, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school meets the requirements of the Baker Clause, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 13 with information about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.
- Leaders do not make use of alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this inspection under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We deemed the inspection a graded (section 5) inspection under the same Act.

In accordance with section 44(2) of the Education Act 2005, His Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires significant improvement,

because it is performing significantly less well than it might in all the circumstances reasonably be expected to perform.

- 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 carried out deep dives in English, history, mathematics and science. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. Inspectors also spoke to curriculum leaders of other subjects.
- Inspectors scrutinised records relating to safer recruitment, child protection and safeguarding training for staff and members of the governing body.
- Inspectors held meetings with leaders regarding personal development and behaviour.
- Inspectors met with members of the governing body and had a telephone conversation with a member of the local authority.
- Inspectors considered responses to the Ofsted surveys of parents, carers, pupils and staff. Inspectors reviewed responses to Ofsted Parent View, including free-text responses.

Inspection team

Sally Kenyon, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Mark Cocker	Ofsted Inspector
Ahmed Marikar	His Majesty's Inspector

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for children looked after, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at <http://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/>.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.gov.uk/ofsted

© Crown copyright 2022