

Inspection of a good school: Gillford Centre

Upperby Road, Carlisle, Cumbria CA2 4JE

Inspection dates:

19 and 20 January 2023

Outcome

Gillford Centre continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils told inspectors that the Gillford Centre is a safe place where staff look after them well. If pupils have any worries, they know that an adult will always help them.

The large majority of pupils enjoy coming to school. Pupils benefit from the positive relationships that they have with their teachers and support staff. Teachers help pupils to learn more successfully and to improve their behaviour when they join the school. Leaders and other staff expect pupils to work hard and behave well. Most pupils meet these expectations, which helps them to achieve well.

Pupils' behaviour in class and around school is mainly good. Sometimes, pupils misbehave, which is typically because of their needs. This can result in their learning being interrupted. However, teachers have effective ways of managing pupils' behaviour and calmly bringing them back to their work again. Bullying sometimes happens. When it does, leaders are good at sorting it out.

Pupils have opportunities to enjoy many activities that help to broaden their experiences. For example, they visit places of interest, such as a local fire station or a Buddhist temple. They can take part in competitive sport when they play football against neighbouring schools. They also enjoy hikes in the nearby countryside.

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

Leaders have designed a broad curriculum with a range of subjects that meet pupils' needs and interests well. Across most of the curriculum, leaders have considered what they want pupils to learn and when it will be taught. However, in a small number of subjects, leaders have not thought clearly enough about the knowledge that pupils need or the order in which they will learn it. Consequently, in these subjects, pupils do not build their learning as strongly as possible.

Teachers have secure knowledge of the subjects that they teach. Those teachers who are not specialists in a subject receive helpful support from those teachers who are. There are effective ways of assessing pupils' knowledge and understanding. Leaders and teachers check how much pupils know when they first join the school. Usually, new pupils have missed out on substantial amounts of learning. Teachers identify gaps in pupils' knowledge and plan teaching to help pupils acquire the knowledge that is missing. Teachers frequently check how much pupils have remembered in their lessons. They also test pupils formally at regular intervals. Most pupils improve in their learning as they make their journey through the school.

Leaders focus on improving pupils' behaviour and their attitudes to learning, as well as providing knowledge and skills to support pupils to access the next steps in their education, training or employment. Most pupils successfully return to a mainstream school after a period at the Gillford Centre. Others complete key stage 4 at the centre and achieve qualifications at different levels, including GCSEs in English, mathematics and science. These qualifications enable most pupils in Year 11 to progress to employment, apprenticeships or further education.

Leaders regard reading as highly important. The reading curriculum is well organised. There are daily phonics sessions for pupils in key stage 1. Older pupils who need support with learning phonics also receive daily support. Most pupils read with good fluency and accuracy, which enables them to access the rest of the curriculum. However, a few pupils for whom reading is difficult find their reading books too hard. This is because the books that teachers have given them do not match these pupils' knowledge of phonics. As a result, these pupils do not read fluently.

Leaders identify the needs of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) well. They have a wide range of ways of adapting the teaching of the curriculum to ensure that most pupils can learn as effectively as possible. Pupils who need extra help receive it promptly. Leaders work well with parents and outside services, such as educational psychologists and mental health specialists. Most pupils with SEND achieve as well as possible because of these strategies.

Pupils' needs result in occasional misbehaviour. Staff manage pupils' behaviour with calmness and assurance. There is little disruption to the learning of the curriculum. This is because teachers are adept at bringing pupils back round to their task when their behaviour causes them to lose concentration.

Leaders provide a wide range of activities that go beyond pupils' formal learning and help to develop pupils as fully as possible. For example, pupils raise money for charity and collect food for a local food bank. Pupils receive high-quality advice and information about careers.

Members of the management committee who are responsible for governance know the school well. They have an effective approach to holding leaders to account. They understand their roles and statutory responsibilities. Teachers comment that senior leaders are considerate of their welfare and workload.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders have strong systems and processes that reflect the safeguarding policies that are in place. Leaders provide staff with appropriate safeguarding training. Staff promptly report and record concerns about pupils. Leaders respond quickly to these concerns.

Leaders give pupils the help they need. They make referrals to outside services, such as the local authority's children's social care team, when required. Leaders know the proper procedures to follow in the event of any allegations against members of staff.

Leaders provide pupils with the information they need to keep themselves safe. For example, pupils find out how to stay safe on the internet and learn about healthy relationships.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In a small number of subjects, leaders have not been clear enough in deciding what pupils will learn and in which order they will learn it. As a result, pupils do not build up their knowledge as strongly as possible. Leaders should ensure that the knowledge that pupils need to acquire in these subjects and the order in which staff will teach it are carefully designed so that pupils' learning develops securely.
- A few pupils for whom reading is difficult find their reading books too hard to read fluently. This is because teachers have not provided these pupils with reading books that match their knowledge of phonics. Leaders should ensure that teachers give these pupils reading books that are aligned more closely to their phonics knowledge so that they can become fluent and accurate readers.

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 February 2013.

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	112095
Local authority	Cumbria
Inspection number	10241764
Type of school	Pupil referral unit
School category	Pupil referral unit
Age range of pupils	5 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	58
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Peter McGaw
Headteacher	Rachel Clark
Website	www.thegillfordcentre.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	6 June 2017

Information about this school

- The Gillford Centre is a pupil referral unit, which is situated in Carlisle. It provides education for pupils aged between five and 16 who have been permanently excluded, or are at risk of permanent exclusion, from mainstream schools, mainly in Cumbria. Many pupils have social, emotional and mental health needs. Some pupils are dual registered with their referring mainstream school.
- A new headteacher has been appointed since the last inspection.
- Leaders make use of two unregistered alternative provisions for a small number of pupils.

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 spoke with representatives of the school's management committee who are responsible for governance, the headteacher, other school leaders and a representative of the local authority.

- Inspectors conducted deep dives in these subjects: English, including early reading, mathematics and personal, social, health and economic education. In each subject, they met with the subject leader and teachers. They visited lessons, looked at pupils' work and talked with pupils about their learning. The lead inspector listened to pupils reading to members of staff. Inspectors also spoke with subject leaders about the curriculum in other subjects.
- Inspectors examined the school's safeguarding policy and related policies and documentation. They talked with staff and pupils about safeguarding and about pupils' wider experiences of school. They looked at a range of other documents related to pupils' welfare and their education. They observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and around the school.
- An inspector conducted visits to alternative providers and to the school's other site, the Assessment Centre, which is situated a few miles away from the school at Unit M, Ladybank, Kingmoor Industrial Estate, Carlisle CA6 4SP.
- The lead inspector analysed responses to Ofsted Parent View and Ofsted's staff and pupil surveys.

Inspection team

Mark Quinn, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Elaine Mawson

His Majesty's Inspector

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