

Inspection of a good school: Vicarage Park CofE Primary School

Vicarage Drive, Kendal, Cumbria LA9 5BP

Inspection date:

2 February 2023

Outcome

Vicarage Park CofE Primary School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Leaders, staff and pupils are proud of their warm and welcoming school. There is a strong sense of belonging in this vibrant learning community. Pupils, and children in the early years, feel happy and safe. They said that staff care about them.

Leaders and staff have high expectations of pupils' behaviour and achievement. Pupils respond well to these expectations. Children and pupils of all ages, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), achieve well across the curriculum.

Pupils behave well in lessons and during social times. They get on well together and look after each other. On the rare occasion when bullying occurs, staff deal with it promptly and effectively. Pupils said that if they have any concerns or worries at all, they can easily talk to any adults in school. Pupils explained that everyone is welcome in this school, no matter what their differences are.

There are plenty of opportunities for pupils beyond the academic curriculum. For example, pupils enjoy a variety of trips and visits, including to museums and pantomimes. Pupils develop their leadership skills through taking on responsibilities such as becoming school council members or sports leaders. They further their talents and interests through attending extra-curricular clubs, such as dance, sports, well-being and art.

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

Pupils learn from an ambitious and inspiring curriculum that covers a broad range of subjects. The curriculum is well organised. Leaders have identified the essential knowledge that they want pupils to learn by the time they leave the school. This key knowledge has been broken down into smaller steps so that pupils can learn in a logical order. Subject leaders have ensured that teachers in each year group are clear about what content to teach and when this content should be taught. This helps pupils to learn well.

Most pupils confidently articulate links with prior learning. In lessons, teachers quickly identify and address any misconceptions that pupils have. That said, in a few subjects, teachers do not use assessment strategies as effectively as they should to check on how well pupils are learning the curriculum over time. This means that sometimes, some pupils develop gaps in their knowledge and vocabulary.

Reading is prioritised. Leaders have recently improved their approaches to teaching early reading. Children begin learning phonics promptly in the Reception class. Leaders have ensured that staff are suitably trained to deliver the phonics programme consistently well. Leaders regularly check on pupils' phonics knowledge and make sure that they learn to read with books that match the sounds they know. As a result, most pupils quickly learn to read. Leaders provide effective help for those pupils who need to catch up, including bespoke support for pupils with SEND where appropriate.

Most older pupils have a genuine love of reading. They spoke with enthusiasm about the books that they were reading and their favourite authors. Pupils look forward to their visits to the popular school library. Staff read to pupils regularly and pupils said that they enjoy this time greatly. Some pupils, however, do not read with as much fluency as they should. This hinders how well these pupils understand the texts that they read across the wider curriculum.

Children in the early years get a positive start to their education. Leaders design activities that build on what children already know. As a result of leaders' well-thought-out curriculum in the early years, children are well prepared for key stage 1.

Leaders identify pupils' additional needs quickly and accurately. Teachers make appropriate adaptations to the delivery of the curriculum. This ensures that pupils with SEND are well supported to fully access the curriculum alongside their peers.

There is a calm and purposeful atmosphere around school. In classrooms, pupils are able to concentrate on their learning because lessons are rarely interrupted by poor behaviour. During breaktimes and lunchtimes, pupils play kindly with each other.

Leaders provide pupils with a range of experiences to promote their wider development. Different roles encourage pupils to be effective leaders and take responsibility for themselves and for others. Pupils develop an age-appropriate understanding of considerate, healthy relationships.

Staff feel valued. They appreciate the support that leaders provide for their workload and well-being. The governing body is knowledgeable. They bring a useful range of skills and expertise to support and challenge leaders in equal measure. As a result, governors have an accurate understanding of what needs to improve further in the quality of education.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders ensure that there is a strong culture of safeguarding in the school. Staff receive regular and appropriate safeguarding training. The procedures for identifying and reporting concerns about a pupil's welfare are clear. Leaders follow up any concerns diligently.

Leaders make sure that all staff are suitable to work with children. Leaders work well with external agencies to ensure that pupils and their families receive the timely support that they need.

Pupils know how to keep safe, including when online.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In a few subjects, some teachers do not know how well pupils have learned the most important concepts and vocabulary in the curriculum over time. On occasion, some pupils have gaps in their knowledge. Leaders should ensure that assessment strategies in these subjects give teachers the information that they need to check how well pupils have learned the curriculum.
- Some pupils do not read as fluently as they should. This affects how well these pupils understand what they have read across the wider curriculum. Leaders should ensure that pupils get enough opportunities to practise their reading so that they can become fluent and confident 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 first ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good in September 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.

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	112269
Local authority	Cumbria
Inspection number	10256126
Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	108
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Shelagh Hughes
Acting Headteacher	Katie Green
Website	www.vicarageparkschool.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	27 and 28 September 2017, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school is part of the Diocese of Carlisle. The last section 48 inspection took place in October 2022.
- Leaders do not make any use of alternative provision for pupils.

Information about this inspection

- This was the first routine inspection that the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and took this into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors spoke with the acting headteacher, other leaders and members of staff. They also spoke with members of the governing body, including the chair of governors.
- Inspectors looked at a range of documentation, including leaders' self-evaluation and safeguarding documents. Inspectors spoke with leaders about the school's safeguarding procedures.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in early reading, mathematics and geography. They talked with curriculum leaders, visited lessons, looked at examples of children's and

pupils' work, held discussions with teachers and talked with children and pupils. Inspectors also observed some pupils reading to trusted staff.

- Inspectors observed children and pupils' behaviour in class and as they moved around the school. Inspectors also observed pupils playing at breaktimes.
- Inspectors spoke with groups of children and pupils about their experiences at school.
- Inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text responses. They also met with parents before school to find out their views of the school.
- Inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted's online surveys for staff and for pupils.

Inspection team

Rebecca Sharples, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Lindy Griffiths

Ofsted Inspector

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