

# Inspection of Thwaites School

Hallthwaites, Millom, Cumbria LA18 5HP

---

Inspection dates: 7 and 8 February 2023

## **Overall effectiveness**

## **Requires improvement**

---

The quality of education

**Requires improvement**

Behaviour and attitudes

**Good**

Personal development

**Good**

Leadership and management

**Requires improvement**

Early years provision

**Requires improvement**

Previous inspection grade

Requires improvement

## **What is it like to attend this school?**

Pupils are happy at Thwaites School. They value the friendships that they have with pupils of different ages. Older pupils help younger ones at lunchtime. They read with them regularly and look after them at playtime. Pupils have strong relationships with staff. They know that adults will help them if they feel worried or upset. Leaders deal with bullying and any incidents of unkind behaviour quickly to stop it from happening again. This helps pupils to feel safe.

Leaders have high expectations of pupils' behaviour. They expect pupils to 'be safe, be respectful and be ready', and pupils embrace this. Most pupils behave sensibly and responsibly. However, over time, expectations of pupils' academic achievement have not been high enough. Leaders have not thought carefully enough about how to organise pupils' learning from the early years to Year 6. Therefore, pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), do not have the chance to achieve as well as they should.

Pupils appreciate the opportunities that they have to develop new interests and talents. They attend clubs such as sports, gardening, construction and gymnastics. Some pupils participate in cross country, bench ball and multi-sports competitions with other schools. The older pupils have enjoyed ghyll scrambling, canoeing, raft building and outdoor swimming. These experiences help pupils to build resilience, confidence and self-esteem. They also help them to learn how to successfully work in a team. This prepares them well for the next stage of their education.

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

Leaders have designed a broad curriculum. However, they have not identified the important knowledge that pupils should learn from the early years to Year 6. They have also not thought carefully enough about the order of pupils' learning so that pupils, including children in the early years, can build on prior learning in a logical way. This means that pupils do not achieve as well as they should.

In most subjects, teachers have the knowledge that they need to teach the curriculum well. They check what pupils know and address misconceptions. However, leaders have not established consistent assessment strategies for teachers to use across the curriculum. This means that teachers are not sure how to check what pupils have learned and remembered.

The activity choices that teachers make support pupils with new learning. However, in some subjects, the work that is given to pupils does not enable them to develop a detailed understanding over time. This means that some pupils do not acquire the depth of knowledge that they need to prepare them for the next stage of education.

Leaders quickly identify pupils who may have additional needs. Teachers are given the information that they need to be able to support pupils with SEND to access the same curriculum as their classmates.

Leaders have prioritised reading from the early years to Year 6. Pupils read widely and often in and out of school. Leaders have successfully introduced a new phonics curriculum from the beginning of the Reception Year. Pupils learn sounds in a systematic way. They read books that contain the sounds and words that they know. This helps pupils to become confident and fluent readers. Those who struggle to keep up with the pace of the phonics curriculum are helped to catch up.

Most pupils enjoy their learning and concentrate well in their lessons. They listen carefully to their teachers. Disruption to their lessons is rare. A small number of pupils, including children in the early years, struggle to control their emotions and behaviour. Staff support them appropriately with calming activities so that they can return to their learning quickly.

Leaders ensure that pupils have sufficient opportunities for personal development. Most pupils have roles of responsibility and play a positive role in decision-making in school. Some pupils are monitors and librarians. They look after equipment and help to establish routines for other pupils to follow. Some pupils are also members of the school council. They have organised fund-raising events to raise money for charity and to raise funds to spend in school. For example, they raised money to buy a buddy bench for the playground. These opportunities help pupils to make a positive contribution to the school and wider community.

There has been a turbulent period in leadership and staffing in the school. This has led to some fragility in leadership. The consultant headteacher has taken appropriate action to halt the decline. This has been effective in addressing the weaknesses in behaviour and attitudes, attendance and personal development. However, weaknesses in the quality of education, including in the early years, remain. Governors have not carried out their roles effectively to hold leaders to account for the quality of education.

Staff are positive about the actions that leaders have taken to prioritise their workload and well-being during a challenging time. Staff feel valued and supported by leaders.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders have established a culture of safeguarding. They have ensured that staff are provided with training to help them to identify pupils who may be at risk of harm. Staff report any concerns that they may have promptly. Leaders respond appropriately and take swift and decisive action. They have established close links with other agencies to secure additional help for those pupils and families that need it.

Leaders provide help for vulnerable pupils in school. They have appointed an emotional support worker to give pupils a safe space to share their worries and

concerns.

Pupils learn about how to keep themselves safe, including when they are online. They are made aware of potential risks and know what to do if they have any concerns.

## **What does the school need to do to improve?**

### **(Information for the school and appropriate authority)**

- Governors have not held leaders to account for the quality of education across the school over time. As a result, leaders have not taken sufficient action to address the weaknesses in the curriculum since the previous inspection. Governors should ensure that they carry out their role effectively by holding leaders to account for the quality of education.
- In some subjects, leaders have not clearly identified the essential knowledge that pupils, including children in the early years, should learn or the order in which it should be taught. This means that some pupils are not able to build on prior learning or progress through the curriculum as they should. Leaders should ensure that the curriculum clearly sets out the knowledge that pupils should learn and when they should learn it.
- Leaders have not established consistent assessment strategies for teachers to use across the curriculum. This means that teachers are not sure if pupils have learned and remembered what was intended. Leaders should ensure that there are assessment strategies in place so that teachers can check what pupils know and remember.
- In some subjects, including in the early years, leaders have not ensured that the work given to pupils enables them to develop detailed knowledge in that subject. As a result, some pupils do not acquire the depth of knowledge that they need to be fully prepared for the next stage of education. Leaders should ensure that teachers give pupils work that deepens their knowledge and better prepares them for the next stage of their education.

## **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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	112166
<b>Local authority</b>	Cumbria
<b>Inspection number</b>	10256077
<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3 to 11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	43
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair of governing body</b>	Ged McGrath
<b>Headteacher</b>	Nicky Edwards (Consultant Headteacher)
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.thwaites.cumbria.sch.uk">www.thwaites.cumbria.sch.uk</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	19 and 20 March 2019, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

## Information about this school

- A consultant headteacher has been appointed since the previous inspection. There have also been some changes to the leadership team and governing body.
- Leaders do not use any alternative provision.

## Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- 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.
- During this inspection, inspectors met with the consultant headteacher and other leaders in school. They also spoke with a range of staff.
- The lead inspector met with five governors, including the chair of the governing body. She also spoke with two representatives of the local authority.
- Inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted Parent View, including the free-

text comments. They also considered the responses from the Ofsted survey for staff and pupils.

- The lead inspector examined a range of safeguarding documentation. She checked how leaders ensure that safer recruitment procedures are in place. The inspector checked records of staff's safeguarding training. Inspectors also spoke to staff to check how well they understand safeguarding procedures.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour at playtimes, in lessons and around school. They also spoke to pupils about their experiences at school.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in early reading, mathematics and history. They met leaders and teachers and visited a sample of lessons. Inspectors spoke with pupils about their learning in these subjects. They also looked at examples of pupils' work.
- The lead inspector observed pupils reading to trusted adults. She also considered the curriculum across some other subject areas and looked at examples of pupils' work.

### **Inspection team**

Sally Timmons, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Cleo Cunningham

Ofsted 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](mailto: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/](http://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](mailto: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](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)  
W: [www.gov.uk/ofsted](http://www.gov.uk/ofsted)

© Crown copyright 2023