

Inspection of a good school: Blennerhasset School

Blennerhasset, Wigton, Cumbria CA7 3RL

Inspection date: 21 March 2023

Outcome

Blennerhasset School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils enjoy coming to Blennerhasset School. They value the positive relationships that they have with staff and with each other. They understand why it is important to be kind and caring towards others. They try their best to be considerate of each other. They have adults in the school who they can talk to if they have any concerns or worries. Leaders deal quickly and effectively with any unkind behaviour or bullying. This helps pupils to feel safe.

Leaders have high expectations of pupils' learning and behaviour. Their values, 'believe, achieve, succeed', encourage pupils to be confident and aspirational. Pupils know how to behave and do so very well in lessons and at social times. Pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), want to achieve well and most do.

Pupils appreciate the wide range of clubs that they can attend. For example, pupils, including children in the early years, can attend science, gardening, cross-stitch and enterprise clubs. They also participate in festivals with other schools, such as dance and cricket and gymnastics competitions. They enjoy the annual residential visit as well as other trips, such as to the beach and to a pantomime. These experiences help them to develop interests and talents but also to build teamwork skills, resilience, perseverance and self-esteem.

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

Leaders have designed a broad and ambitious curriculum from the early years to the end of Year 6. They have thought carefully about how the curriculum is suitable for classes with more than one year group. They are clear about the essential knowledge that pupils should have and when they should acquire it. They have developed a curriculum that reflects the local area. For example, they ensure that pupils learn about local history and local artists.

Leaders identify quickly pupils who may have additional needs. Teachers help pupils with SEND to follow the same curriculum as their classmates.

In most subjects, teachers have had the training that they need to teach the curriculum well. They have secure knowledge of the subjects that they teach. They choose appropriate activities for pupils to practise their learning. However, in some subjects they do not pick up pupils' errors and misconceptions as effectively as they should. This means that some pupils do not have the prior knowledge that they need to help them with new learning.

Leaders have prioritised reading across the school. They have invited authors into the school to inspire pupils and to help them to write their own books. Some older pupils read with younger children. This has encouraged pupils to read more widely and often. Leaders have developed an effective phonics curriculum from the beginning of the Reception Year. Staff are skilled in teaching the phonics curriculum and pupils achieve well. They learn sounds in a logical order over time. The books that they read match the sounds and words that they know. This helps them to develop confidence and fluency. Staff help any pupils who fall behind to catch up with their peers.

Pupils behave well in their lessons and around the school. They follow established routines and know what teachers expect of them. They are polite and friendly. Pupils enjoy their learning and most concentrate well. This means that they can learn without poor behaviour interrupting their lessons.

Leaders have designed a curriculum that encourages pupils' broader development. Pupils have a number of opportunities to be responsible and thoughtful citizens. For example, some pupils design and make products that they sell to raise money for charities that are meaningful to them. Pupils also create hampers, drawings and written messages to distribute to older people living in the community. Leaders have developed links with a school in Gambia. Pupils have written letters to other pupils there and have learned about their life. This helps them to develop a deeper understanding of other countries and cultures in the wider world.

Governors support, challenge and hold leaders to account effectively. They are mindful of the workload of staff in a small school. Staff feel valued and supported. They know that their workload and well-being are priorities for leaders.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders have ensured that staff have the training that they need to identify pupils who may be at risk of neglect or abuse. Leaders know pupils well and are alert to signs that they may be suffering from harm. Staff know how to report concerns. Leaders act swiftly on these concerns. They make sure that vulnerable pupils receive the help that they need. Staff provide a wealth of emotional well-being support for pupils and their families. For example, they provide trauma-related support, draw-and-talk therapy and emotional resilience work in school. Leaders also secure additional help from other agencies.

Staff and external specialists teach pupils how to keep themselves safe, including when they are online. For example, pupils from the early years to Year 6 attend swimming lessons because of the close proximity of the school to a river. Older pupils also learn life-saving skills.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In some subjects, leaders have not ensured that teachers identify and address pupils' errors and misconceptions effectively. This means that some pupils' prior learning is not as secure as it should be. Leaders should ensure that teachers have the training and support that they need to check what pupils know and can remember and use this information to shape their future teaching.

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 December 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	112104
Local authority	Cumbria
Inspection number	10241849
Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	72
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Laurie Mansfield
Headteacher	Jillian Harrison-Longworth
Website	www.blennerhasset.cumbria.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	13 September 2017, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- Leaders do not use any alternative provision.

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.
- During this inspection, inspectors met with the headteacher and other leaders in the school. They also spoke with a range of staff.
- The lead inspector spoke with three governors, including the chair of the governing body. She also spoke with a representative 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 surveys for staff. There were no responses from the survey for pupils.
- The lead inspector examined a range of safeguarding documentation. She checked how leaders ensure that safer recruitment procedures are in place. She 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 breaktimes, in lessons and around the 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. They spoke with pupils about their learning in these subjects. They also looked at examples of pupils' work.
- The lead inspector observed pupils reading to a trusted adult.

Inspection team

Sally Timmons, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Andy Cunningham

His Majesty's Inspector

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