

Inspection of Kirkby Thore School

Kirkby Thore, Penrith, Cumbria CA10 1UU

Inspection dates: 8 and 9 March 2023

Overall effectiveness

Inadequate

The quality of education

Inadequate

Behaviour and attitudes

Requires improvement

Personal development

Requires improvement

Leadership and management

Inadequate

Early years provision

Inadequate

Previous inspection grade

Good

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils, and children in the early years, have been let down at this school. They do not receive the quality of education that they are entitled to or deserve. Leaders do not take all of the actions that they should to keep pupils safe. Despite these weaknesses, pupils are happy at school. They enjoy spending time with their friends and they get on well with staff.

Leaders have not set high expectations for pupils' achievement. Pupils suffer from a curriculum that lacks ambition. Too frequently, older pupils in mixed-age classes receive work that is more suited to their younger classmates. Across the school, pupils underachieve, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) and those in the early years.

For most of the time, pupils behave well. For example, they walk around school sensibly. Children in the early years learn to share toys and resources. However, on occasions some pupils do not follow the expectations set by their teachers. This usually happens when the work that they receive does not meet their needs or interests. Leaders take swift action to address any bullying behaviour should it ever occur.

Pupils enjoy the trips and visits that leaders provide. For example, older pupils look forward to their residential stay in York. Pupils enjoyed the pantomime at a local theatre. However, there are very few activities for pupils to develop their talents and interests. This limits pupils' development beyond the academic curriculum.

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

Leaders and governors have allowed the quality of education to deteriorate considerably since the last inspection. They have been slow to recognise or to take action to address the decline. Pupils have borne the brunt of this failure. In all key stages, they do not achieve well. This includes disadvantaged pupils and those with SEND.

Leaders have not designed the curriculum well. Leaders have not ensured that the important knowledge in each subject is broken down into smaller steps for each year group. This prevents staff from providing work that meets the needs of the range of pupils in mixed-age classes. Instead, pupils in these classes frequently receive the same work, regardless of what they already know or need to know. Consequently, older pupils in each class cannot build up their knowledge or deepen their understanding in ways that are appropriate for their age.

With the support of the local authority, leaders have very recently made some changes to the curriculum, especially for pupils in Years 1 to 6. The curriculum now contains more information about the most important knowledge that pupils should learn in each year group. However, these developments are not complete. They are

at far too early a stage to have had any impact on pupils' learning. Consequently, many pupils continue to have large gaps in their knowledge across many subjects.

Leaders' curriculum development has not extended to the early years. Leaders have not considered the knowledge that children need to learn or the order in which this will be taught. Children in the early years are poorly prepared for key stage 1.

Leaders have not provided subject leaders with enough training to carry out their roles effectively. This prevents subject leaders from supporting staff to deliver the curriculum well. This contributes to a lack of capacity to tackle weaknesses across the school.

Leaders and staff do not make effective use of assessment information to identify gaps in pupils' knowledge. This prevents them from making the necessary changes to their teaching or to the curriculum to help pupils gain missing knowledge. Teachers do not check effectively that pupils' knowledge is secure before moving on to new learning. Pupils frequently struggle to remember what they have learned over time.

Leaders have not given sufficient priority to the teaching of reading. Children in the early years do not learn letters and sounds as quickly or as securely as they should. Staff do not have the expertise that they need to recognise when children are ready for reading books. Sometimes older pupils at the early stage of reading receive reading books that are too difficult for them. Leaders have taken some steps to encourage older pupils to develop a love of reading. For example, pupils enjoy collecting rewards for reading at home. Nonetheless, pupils of all ages do not achieve as well as they should in reading.

Leaders work with staff to identify pupils who may have SEND. They work with agencies, such as speech therapists, to ensure that pupils receive extra help if it is needed. However, pupils with SEND receive the same poor quality of education as other pupils in the school. Consequently, these pupils do not achieve well.

Most pupils attend school regularly and follow the school rules. However, on a few occasions, some pupils lose focus in class and behave inappropriately. This is usually because they are bored or find their work too easy or too difficult. The learning of other pupils in class is disturbed when this happens.

Pupils learn about British values such as democracy and tolerance through the personal, social, health and economic education programme. They contribute to their community through activities such as singing carols in the village hall. Pupils have an age-appropriate understanding of differences and similarities between people. However, leaders provide few activities for pupils that might support them to develop hobbies or pursuits beyond school.

Staff said that they feel supported by leaders and governors in terms of their workload and well-being. They enjoy working at the school.

Governors do not hold leaders properly to account for their work. They do not ask enough challenging questions about the impact of the curriculum on pupils' achievement. This has prevented them from developing an accurate understanding of the extent of the school's weaknesses. Governors and leaders do not have the capacity to improve the school. They are over-reliant on external support to make any positive change.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are not effective.

Staff receive regular safeguarding training and know how to report any concerns that they have about pupils' welfare. However, leaders do not always act quickly or appropriately in response to these concerns. The quality of record-keeping is poor. This prevents leaders from building a thorough understanding of when pupils might be at risk from harm.

Leaders maintain contact details for agencies such as the local authority safeguarding hub. However, leaders have a weak understanding of when it is appropriate to seek help or advice from these agencies in order to keep pupils safe.

Through the curriculum, pupils learn how to keep themselves safe online.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Governors have an inaccurate and over-optimistic view of the school's effectiveness. This has prevented them from holding leaders to account for the school's decline over time. Governors must ensure that they develop a full and accurate understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses in order to hold leaders fully to account for their work to improve the school.
- Leaders have not ensured that the curriculum breaks down knowledge into smaller, well-ordered components from the early years to Year 6. This prevents teachers in mixed-age classes from providing work that meets the needs of each age group in their class. Pupils underachieve as a result. In addition, this leads to some pupils losing focus and behaving less well in class. Leaders must ensure that the curriculum makes it clear what pupils need to learn in each age group, so that they gain a secure body of knowledge over time
- Leaders have not ensured that children in the early years progress through the phonics programme as well as they should. Children's reading development is delayed as a result. Leaders must ensure that teachers and staff keep up with the demands of the phonics programme so that children gain a secure foundation for their phonics learning in Year 1.
- Leaders have not ensured that the staff who teach phonics have the expertise that they need. This prevents these staff from delivering the phonics programme

effectively. This means that pupils, including those with SEND, do not become confident, fluent or accurate readers. Leaders must ensure that they equip staff with the knowledge that they need to deliver the phonics programme consistently well.

- Subject leaders have not received training to help them to lead their subjects effectively. This prevents them from providing support to colleagues to enable them to implement the recently revised curriculums. Leaders must ensure that they provide the support and training that will enable subject leaders to have a greater influence on teaching and pupils' learning.
- The curriculum for children in the early years is poorly designed. It does not contain enough information about all of the important knowledge that children need to learn, or the order in which this knowledge should be taught. This prevents children from being well prepared for key stage 1. Leaders must ensure that the curriculum in the early years contains the information that staff need to help children to learn everything that they need to know in readiness for Year 1.
- Leaders and staff do not make effective use of assessment information. This prevents them from making any necessary adjustments to teaching or to the curriculum to help overcome gaps in pupils' knowledge. Leaders must ensure that assessment information is used effectively to support pupils' learning and to improve the curriculum over time.
- Pupils have a very small choice of activities to help them develop their talents and interests. This limits pupils' personal development and their preparation for the next stage in their education. Leaders must ensure that pupils have more opportunities to engage in a wider range of activities beyond the academic.

Leaders and those responsible for governance may not appoint early career teachers before the next monitoring inspection.

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	112181
Local authority	Cumbria
Inspection number	10226148
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	34
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Shaun Cowin
Headteacher	Neal Banner
Website	www.kirkbythore.cumbria.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	21 March 2017, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- A new headteacher and a new chair of governors have been appointed since the last inspection.
- Leaders do not make use of any alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

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

In accordance with section 44(1) of the Education Act 2005, His Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires special measures because it is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school.

- 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.

- The inspectors met with the headteacher and with members of the governing body.
- The lead inspector also met with representatives of the local authority.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics, and computing. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to pupils and looked at samples of pupils' work. The lead inspector also observed some pupils reading to a familiar adult.
- Inspectors also spoke to leaders about the curriculum in some other subjects and looked at a range of pupils' books.
- Inspectors reviewed a range of documentation about safeguarding. They also spoke with staff to understand how they keep pupils safe.
- The inspectors considered the views expressed by parents and carers in their responses to Ofsted Parent View. This included free-text comments. An inspector also chatted to a few parents at the beginning and end of the school day.
- The inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted's online surveys for staff and for pupils.
- The inspectors spoke to some pupils about school life.
- The inspectors spoke with staff to discuss leaders' support for their workload and well-being.

Inspection team

Mavis Smith, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Mark Hazzard

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.

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 2023