

# Inspection of a good school: Netherhall School

Netherhall Road, Maryport, Cumbria CA15 6NT

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Inspection dates:

1 and 2 March 2023

## Outcome

There has been no change to this school's overall judgement of good as a result of this ungraded (section 8) inspection. However, the evidence gathered suggests that the inspection grade might not be as high if a graded (section 5) inspection were carried out now. The next inspection will therefore be a graded inspection.

## What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils, including students in the sixth form, appreciate the work that leaders have done to establish a calm environment around the school. This helps pupils to feel safe. Pupils are happy and polite. They enjoy respectful relationships with staff. This has a positive impact on pupils' behaviour and learning.

Pupils are confident that leaders and staff will listen to any concerns that they may have. Staff deal with any incidents of bullying effectively.

Leaders have high expectations of pupils' achievement. However, leaders have not ensured that pupils learn the curriculum in sufficient depth over time. In addition, some pupils do not attend school regularly enough. As a result, some pupils do not achieve as well as they should.

Pupils enjoy taking part in a wide range of activities, including art clubs, academic support and a variety of sports activities. In the sixth form, students thrive on opportunities to present their ideas, for example when engaging with social enterprise projects in support of the people in the local community.

Pupils told inspectors that they have a strong voice. They welcome the actions that leaders take to make improvements to the school in response to their ideas.

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

Leaders' high aspirations for all pupils are reflected in their recent work to improve the curriculum. Leaders have strengthened subject curriculums so that they are well ordered, and they set out the knowledge that all pupils should learn. In key stage 4, and the sixth form, leaders have broadened the range of academic and vocational subjects that pupils

and students can choose to study. The proportion of pupils following the English Baccalaureate suite of subjects is beginning to increase. Students in the sixth form are well prepared for the next stage of their education, employment or training.

In some subjects, leaders and teachers have identified the important subject-specific vocabulary that pupils should learn. In these subjects, teachers skilfully use their expertise to ensure that they emphasise the development of this vocabulary. This helps pupils, including students in the sixth form, to learn increasingly well.

In some other subjects, some teachers do not deliver the curriculum consistently well. At times, teachers do not design learning that helps pupils to build on what they already know. This hinders how well pupils apply their knowledge to more sophisticated concepts and ideas. When this happens, some pupils do not develop the depth of understanding that they should.

In the main, where the curriculum is delivered effectively, teachers accurately identify gaps in pupils' knowledge. This enables these teachers to quickly address any misconceptions that pupils may have.

Most pupils benefit from the support that they receive to improve their reading knowledge. These pupils become confident, fluent readers. However, other less confident readers do not catch up quickly enough with their reading knowledge. This is because the support that staff provide is not well matched to these pupils' specific reading needs. This hampers these pupils' ability to access the wider curriculum.

Leaders identify the additional needs of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) quickly and accurately. They provide teachers with detailed information about the needs of these pupils. Teachers use this information successfully to adapt the delivery of the curriculum for pupils with SEND. However, pupils with SEND are affected by the same weaknesses in the curriculum as their peers.

Leaders have begun to secure improvements in some pupils' rates of attendance. Despite these improvements, some pupils do not attend school as regularly as they should. As a result, these pupils miss out on important learning.

Pupils typically demonstrate positive attitudes to learning. On the rare occasions that low-level disruption occurs, staff address this effectively. Leaders provide appropriate support for some pupils who find it more difficult to manage their own behaviour. This ensures that the behaviour of these pupils improves over time.

Leaders have designed a range of experiences which make a strong contribution to pupils' personal development. Pupils have a secure understanding of what constitutes a healthy relationship. They know how to look after their physical and mental health.

Pupils are aspirational about their futures. They benefit from a comprehensive programme of activities which develops their employability skills and awareness of the education and training opportunities available to them. For example, key stage 4 pupils learn about

apprenticeship opportunities with local employers, and sixth-form students learn how to manage their finances at university.

Governors know their community well. They share leaders' aspirations for the achievement of all pupils. Staff value the consideration that leaders give to their workload and well-being.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders have ensured that all staff access the training that they need to keep pupils safe.

Staff know pupils and their families well. Staff are quick to identify any changes in pupils' behaviour that may indicate that they are at risk of harm. Staff report any concerns that they have about a pupil's welfare quickly. Leaders respond swiftly.

Leaders work closely with other agencies when necessary so that pupils and their families receive the timely support that they require.

Pupils know how to stay safe online and who to talk to if they have concerns.

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

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

- In some subjects, teachers do not design learning that helps pupils to build on their prior knowledge or to apply this knowledge to more sophisticated concepts and ideas. As a result, in these subjects, some pupils do not learn the curriculum in sufficient depth. Leaders should ensure that teachers are well equipped to deliver the curriculum consistently well.
- Some pupils do not read as well as they should. This hinders how well these pupils learn. Leaders should ensure that they provide these pupils with the support that they need to improve their confidence and fluency in reading. This is so that these pupils can fully access the wider curriculum.
- Some pupils do not attend school as regularly as they should. These pupils miss out on important learning, and some develop gaps in their knowledge as a result. Leaders should ensure that they support these pupils to improve their rates of attendance.

## **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 February 2018.

## **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

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| <b>Unique reference number</b>                    | 112382   |
| <b>Local authority</b>                            | Cumbria  |
| <b>Inspection number</b>                          | 10256160   |
| <b>Type of school</b>                             | Secondary comprehensive  |
| <b>School category</b>                            | Community  |
| <b>Age range of pupils</b>                        | 11 to 18   |
| <b>Gender of pupils</b>                           | Mixed  |
| <b>Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision</b>   | Mixed  |
| <b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>        | 743  |
| <b>Of which, number on roll in the sixth form</b> | 72   |
| <b>Appropriate authority</b>                      | The governing body   |
| <b>Chair of governing body</b>                    | Neil Watt  |
| <b>Headteacher</b>                                | David Tromans  |
| <b>Website</b>                                    | <a href="http://www.netherhall.cumbria.sch.uk">www.netherhall.cumbria.sch.uk</a> |
| <b>Date of previous inspection</b>                | 6 February 2018  |

## Information about this school

- The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 7 to 13 with information and engagement about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.
- The school makes use of one registered and five 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 carried out deep dives in the following subjects: English, mathematics and art and design. Inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited

lessons, reviewed pupils' work and spoke with staff and pupils.

- Inspectors met with the headteacher and with other senior leaders.
- Inspectors held meetings with the school adviser and with members of the local governing body, including the chair of governors.
- Inspectors met with leaders to discuss reading, SEND, the curriculum, pupils' behaviour and attendance and the provision for pupils' wider development.
- Inspectors considered responses to Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text comments. They took account of the responses from staff and pupils to Ofsted's online surveys and gathered the views of staff and pupils throughout the inspection.
- To inspect safeguarding, inspectors met with leaders, staff and pupils. Inspectors checked a sample of leaders' safeguarding records and reviewed the recruitment checks made on staff.
- Inspectors spoke with pupils about their experiences of school life and their views of behaviour and bullying. Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour during lessons and at breaktimes and lunchtimes.
- Inspectors spoke to staff about their workload and well-being.

### **Inspection team**

Andy Cunningham, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Paul Edmondson

Ofsted Inspector

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