

Inspection of a good school: Threlkeld CofE Primary School

Blease Road, Threlkeld, Keswick, Cumbria CA12 4RX

Inspection date: 23 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. Inspectors are recommending the next inspection to be a graded inspection.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils skip into school each morning with happy, smiling faces. Adults warmly welcome pupils as they arrive. Each day, pupils are eager to catch up with their friends and to begin learning.

Staff know pupils and their families very well in this caring, close-knit community. Staff quickly resolve any issues that pupils may have. For example, they deal with any incidents of unkind behaviour or bullying effectively. This helps pupils to feel safe.

Teachers have higher expectations of pupils' behaviour than they did in the past. Pupils are proud that their behaviour and conduct have improved. Pupils were keen to share how they had a strong voice in devising the new behaviour system, alongside staff.

Teachers are increasing their expectations of what pupils can achieve. However, some pupils do not achieve as well as they should. This is because, until more recently, pupils have not experienced a well-designed curriculum. Consequently, some pupils do not have a secure enough knowledge of the different subjects that they study, including mathematics and reading.

Children in the early years, including those in the Nursery Year, learn well. They are inquisitive. They enjoy doing yoga each morning to keep healthy and fit.

Pupils take good care of Dougal and Daisy, the school guinea pigs. They enjoy swimming, ghyll scrambling and paddle boarding. Pupils cherish leading fortnightly celebration assemblies, where they applaud the good work of others.

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

The recently appointed leadership team and new teaching staff have begun to transform this school. Until more recently, there had been considerable turbulence in leadership and staffing. With the support of the trust, which took over the school in June 2021, leaders have taken swift action to begin to improve the quality of education at the pace required. Leaders, trustees, and more recently governors, have taken courageous decisions, some of which have been unpopular, to set the school on a pathway to success. For example, they have overhauled how they identify pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) to ensure that systems are effective.

Leaders have also taken effective action to establish a purposeful learning environment, where pupils are beginning to flourish. They have reshaped how pupils learn and they have changed how well pupils behave. Pupils acknowledged that the school has changed for the better. They have noticed how they can get on with their learning without interruption. Parents and carers have also recognised that their children are much happier in school because of the positive changes that leaders have made to behaviour and to daily routines.

Leaders and trustees have successfully carried out a full review of the curriculum. They have devised an effective curriculum that is suitably broad, balanced and ambitious. Leaders have carefully identified the essential knowledge that pupils must learn. The curriculum has been well designed to support the teaching of mixed-age classes. However, it is far too soon to see the full effect of these changes on pupils' learning and achievement. This is because the curriculum is only just being rolled out.

While children in the early years are thriving because the new curriculum prepares them well for the demands of Year 1, some pupils in key stage 1, and several pupils in key stage 2, have wide gaps in their knowledge, skills and understanding. Some older pupils lack the subject-specific knowledge that they need to succeed. This is because these pupils do not have firm foundations on which to build new learning. This includes pupils with additional needs, including those with SEND.

The new curriculum is presenting some challenges to staff. This is because these staff are still developing the confidence that they require to deliver the curriculum as leaders intend. That said, leaders are in the process of providing a whole range of training and mentoring opportunities, which are beginning to enable staff to develop their subject and curriculum expertise. Leaders are also increasing training in how to adapt the delivery of the curriculum for pupils with SEND. However, it is too early to see the full impact of this training on pupils' achievement. Much of this work is in its infancy.

Leaders are improving the systems to check how well pupils are learning new knowledge. Teachers are becoming more adept at addressing pupils' misunderstandings in class. However, leaders' systems to assess how well pupils are learning new topics and concepts are in their infancy.

Leaders are prioritising reading. In the Nursery, children learn sounds by engaging enthusiastically in songs and nursery rhymes. In the Reception Year, and in Year 1,

leaders have introduced a new phonics programme for which all staff have been suitably trained. The books that pupils read are closely matched to the sounds that they know. Pupils are developing their phonics knowledge well. Those pupils who fall behind with the phonics programme receive timely support to catch up quickly. However, pupils in key stage 2 do not have a fully formed reading curriculum. Consequently, some pupils do not have the vocabulary, comprehension skills and understanding of grammar that they need to be competent and proficient writers.

The quality of the programme to promote pupils' personal development is uneven. Pupils learn a great deal about their emotions, healthy living and how to be tolerant and respectful of one another. They do this through the well-designed personal, social, health and economic education curriculum. However, pupils do not have sufficient understanding of fundamental British values, for example democracy and the rule of law. They do not understand enough about different families or cultures. Nor do they have sufficient opportunities to enhance their understanding of the curriculum through well-thought-out trips and visits. Nevertheless, leaders have effective plans in place to remedy these weaknesses.

Governors have overseen a decline in the quality of education for pupils. Some governors have not challenged leaders to improve the quality of education. They have not asked the right questions of leaders. Since the trust took over, they have provided governors with additional training and support. The board of directors and other trustees have also added extra checks to ensure that governors fulfil their roles as intended.

Amidst all the change, leaders are shielding staff from too many new initiatives at once. Trustees are ensuring that the headteacher is well cared for. Staff morale is high because there is a clear vision for improvement.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders ensure that staff are well trained to spot the signs that a pupil may be at risk of harm. Leaders also ensure that staff understand how to make appropriate safeguarding referrals when they have a concern about a pupil. Staff do this diligently and leaders follow up on any concerns in a timely manner. Leaders make appropriate referrals to external agencies, when required.

Leaders, governors and trustees routinely evaluate how well safeguarding policies and procedures are working. They also review the curriculum to check that it enables pupils to understand the risks that they may face in the local area. For examples, pupils are taught about first aid, the dangers of water and how to stay safe when online.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Some pupils have gaps in their learning. These gaps have emerged because sometimes pupils do not have a strong enough grasp of subject-specific knowledge and vocabulary. As a result, some pupils have underachieved over time and some current pupils are not achieving well. Leaders should fully implement the new curriculum to enable pupils to learn consistently well. They should ensure that the curriculum enables pupils to develop a deep and rich body of subject-specific knowledge and vocabulary.
- Some staff lack the expertise to deliver the new curriculum confidently. They do not know how to assess pupils' learning as effectively as they should. This is hindering how quickly these staff identify and address pupils' missing knowledge. Leaders should fully train teachers, so that they have the subject expertise that they require to deliver the curriculum consistently well. They should also ensure that teachers know how to check that pupils are learning new information as intended.
- The reading curriculum in key stage 2 is in its infancy. Pupils do not have access to a sufficiently broad range of appropriate texts. Consequently, by the end of key stage 2, some pupils do not have the vocabulary, comprehension skills and grammatical understanding that they require to produce high-quality writing. Leaders should ensure that they roll out their new reading curriculum in key stage 2 and ensure that teachers are trained to deliver it consistently well.
- Some staff have not had sufficient training to adapt the delivery of the curriculum for pupils with SEND. This is hindering how well some pupils with additional learning needs, including SEND, achieve. Leaders should ensure that they train staff on how to adapt the delivery of the curriculum for those pupils with additional learning needs, including SEND.

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 predecessor school, Threlkeld CofE Primary School, to be good in January 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	148607
Local authority	Cumbria
Inspection number	10275145
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	49
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Peter Ballard
Headteacher	Abigail Jardine
Website	www.threlkeld.cumbria.sch.uk/
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- Threlkeld CofE Primary School converted to become an academy school in June 2021. When its predecessor school, Threlkeld CofE Primary School, was last inspected by Ofsted, it was judged to be good overall.
- Leaders do not use any alternative provision.
- The headteacher and several teaching staff have been appointed since the previous inspection.
- Leaders manage a breakfast club and after-school clubs.
- This is a Church of England school in the Diocese of Carlisle. As this is a new school, which is now in the Good Shepherd Multi-Academy Trust, the school had not received its first section 48 inspection at the time of the Ofsted inspection. The predecessor school, Threlkeld CofE Primary School had its last section 48 inspection in 2017.

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 they have taken that into account as part of their evaluation of the school.

- Inspectors met with the headteacher, the chief executive officer of the Good Shepherd Trust and a member of the board of trustees. Inspectors also met with the school improvement partner, who represented the Diocese of Carlisle. Inspectors spoke with members of the local governing body, including the chair of governors.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives into the following subjects: early reading, mathematics and history. For each deep dive, inspectors met with the headteacher, visited lessons, talked with pupils and looked at examples of pupils' work. An inspector also heard pupils read in Years 1 to 3.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour at breaktimes and lunchtimes, and as they moved around the school. They scrutinised leaders' records of pupils' behaviour.
- Inspectors held discussions with the headteacher about pupils' behaviour, pupils' wider personal development and about how well the school provides for pupils with SEND.
- Inspectors reviewed leaders' policies and procedures to keep pupils safe. They scrutinised documentation, such as the single central record. Inspectors also discussed safeguarding procedures with leaders and staff.
- Inspectors spoke with groups of pupils about their experiences at school. Inspectors also held discussions with teachers and other staff to discuss their workload and well-being.
- Inspectors took account of the responses to Ofsted's online survey for staff and pupils. Inspectors also met with parents at the start of the school day. They took account of the responses to Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text responses.

Inspection team

Jonathan Smart, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Garry White

Ofsted Inspector

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