

Inspection of Newtown Primary School

Newtown Road, Carlisle, Cumbria CA2 7LW

Inspection dates:

10 and 11 May 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

Good

Previous inspection grade

Not previously inspected under section 5
of the Education Act 2005

What is it like to attend this school?

Most pupils are polite and calm, and live up to the school's values of respect, responsibility and resilience. They respond well to the high expectations that leaders and teachers have of their conduct.

Although leaders have high expectations of pupils' achievement, some pupils do not achieve as well as they should. This is because the curriculums in some subjects are not sufficiently ambitious. In addition, some pupils do not receive the timely support that they need to improve their phonic knowledge.

Pupils relish opportunities to develop their talents and interests. These include singing in the school choir at Carlisle Cathedral, dance club and taking part in inclusive sports like wheelchair basketball. Pupils learn about the Romans when they visit Vindolanda. They enjoy a wide range of adventurous activities during a residential visit to Lockerbie Manor.

Pupils take pride in aspiring to be the best that they can be. They enjoy taking on responsibilities such as house captains, playground friends and mini police.

Leaders deal effectively with any cases of bullying that occur. This helps pupils to feel happy and safe.

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

Leaders share a clear and ambitious vision for the achievement of all pupils. The support provided by the trust has ensured that school leaders have begun to make improvements to the quality of the curriculum that pupils experience. This is particularly so in the early years, where most pupils are well prepared for the demands of Year 1.

Recent changes to the leadership of some subjects have stalled improvements to the curriculum. As a result, leaders' curriculum thinking in these subjects is not complete and the key knowledge that pupils should learn is not well defined. As a result, the curriculum in these subjects does not help some pupils to achieve as well as they could.

Most teachers use their strong subject knowledge effectively to design activities that help pupils to learn the curriculum well. However, in the subjects where the curriculum has not been finalised, some of the activities that teachers design do not help some pupils to develop their knowledge in sufficient depth. Pupils in the early years benefit from well-designed activities and interactions with adults that effectively support their development.

In most subjects, teachers make effective checks on what pupils know and remember. In those subjects where leaders' curriculum thinking is more developed,

teachers use this information effectively to address any gaps that pupils have in their learning.

Leaders have taken steps to prioritise reading. They have refreshed training for staff in the school's phonics programme and ensured that pupils read books that match the sounds that they are learning. This helps many pupils to become confident and fluent readers.

Leaders ensure that children begin to learn phonics as soon as they join the school in the Reception class. Most pupils who are finding learning to read difficult benefit from the support that they receive to develop their phonic knowledge. At times, staff miss opportunities to address the misconceptions that some of these pupils have about the letters and sounds that they should know. As a result, these pupils do not catch up quickly and they are not as well prepared as they should be for the next phase of their education.

Leaders accurately identify the needs of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Leaders provide teachers with appropriate information and training so that they are aware of the needs of pupils with SEND. Most teachers use this information effectively to design activities that help pupils with SEND to learn alongside their peers.

There is a calm and orderly environment in lessons, on corridors and during playtime. Pupils enjoy positive relationships with each other and with staff. Leaders provide effective support to the small number of pupils who need help to improve their behaviour. Therefore, low-level disruption is rare.

Pupils benefit from a well-designed range of experiences that make a strong contribution to their personal development. Leaders have established links with a well-known football club foundation that helps pupils to learn about diversity and respect for others. Pupils know how to keep themselves physically and mentally healthy. They know the signs of a healthy relationship.

Although leaders have not fully realised their ambitions and vision for the quality of education, they are very clear about what needs to be done. Trust leaders and the local advisory board work well together to set the strategic direction of the school and they hold school leaders to account for the quality of education that pupils receive. Staff value the thought that leaders give to their well-being.

Leaders have strengthened the school's place in the community. This is reflected in the positive views that parents have of the school.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders have established a strong safeguarding culture in the school. They ensure that staff receive the training that they need to identify pupils who may be at risk of

harm. Staff report their concerns quickly. Leaders respond swiftly to these concerns to ensure that pupils access the timely help that they need. This includes working closely with families and other agencies when necessary.

Leaders ensure that pupils know how stay safe in the community and online.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In some subjects, leaders have not finalised their curriculum thinking. In these subjects, pupils experience curriculums which do not help them to build their depth of knowledge over time. Leaders should provide the support that subject leaders need to design and embed suitably ambitious curriculums so that pupils achieve as well as they should.
- In those subjects where leaders' curriculum thinking is in development, teachers sometimes design activities that do not help pupils to develop sufficient breadth and depth of knowledge. Leaders should ensure that teachers receive the support that they need to design activities that help pupils to build their knowledge and understanding over time so that they are well prepared for the next stage of their education.
- At times, staff miss opportunities to address the misconceptions that some pupils have about their phonic knowledge. When this happens, these pupils struggle to segment and blend independently and this prevents them from becoming confident and fluent readers. Leaders should ensure that staff receive the support that they need to deliver the phonics curriculum effectively so that pupils are well prepared 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

Unique reference number	148137
Local authority	Cumberland
Inspection number	10267793
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	125
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	George Beveridge
Headteacher	Gemma Brierley (Interim Executive Headteacher)
Website	www.newtown.cumbria.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- Newtown Primary School converted to become an academy school in September 2020. When its predecessor school, Newtown Community Primary School, was last inspected by Ofsted, it was judged to be inadequate overall.
- The school is part of the Cumbria Education Trust.
- 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.

- 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 carried out deep dives in the following subjects: reading, mathematics and history. The inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited lessons, reviewed pupils' work and spoke with staff and pupils.

- The inspectors met with the interim executive headteacher and the interim head of school. Leaders have appointed a substantive executive headteacher and a substantive headteacher for September 2023.
- The inspectors held meetings with trust leaders, including the chief executive officer, members of the local advisory board, including the chair and the vice chair, and a representative from the local authority.
- The inspectors met with leaders to discuss reading, SEND, the curriculum, pupils' behaviour and attendance, and the provision for pupils' personal development.
- The inspectors considered responses to Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text comments. There were no responses to the pupil and staff surveys. The inspectors gathered the views of staff and pupils throughout the inspection.
- To inspect safeguarding, the inspectors met with leaders, staff and pupils. They checked a sample of leaders' safeguarding records and reviewed the recruitment checks made on staff.
- The inspectors spoke with pupils about their experiences of school life and their views of behaviour and bullying. The inspectors observed pupils' behaviour during lessons and at breaktimes and lunchtimes.
- The 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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