

Inspection of a good school: Ulverston Victoria High School

Springfield Road, Ulverston, Cumbria LA12 0EB

Inspection dates:

20 and 21 September 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 school's next inspection will be a graded inspection.

What is it like to attend this school?

Most pupils, including students in the sixth form, enjoy attending Ulverston Victoria High School. The majority of pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), feel safe in school. The poor behaviour of a small number of pupils at social times spoils the experiences of some of their peers. Some pupils feel bullying incidents are not dealt with well by the school. This affects how happy they feel.

The school has high expectations of pupils' achievement, including those with SEND. Pupils are benefiting from the school's recent changes to the curriculum. Pupils' achievements are improving as a result.

Pupils are keen to nurture their talents by participating in a wide range of extra-curricular clubs. For instance, they enjoy theatre workshops, and they play a range of sports and musical instruments. Pupils relish opportunities to travel to Iceland, France and Barcelona. These experiences help them to expand their linguistic skills and broaden their understanding of the world.

Students in the sixth form are prepared well for their next steps beyond school. They enjoy being positive role models for younger pupils. For instance, they thrive in their roles as reading buddies for pupils in key stage 3 and by acting as mental health ambassadors. This helps students to develop further their leadership and communication skills.

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

The school has strengthened the design of its curriculum. In most subjects, the content of the curriculum is suitably ambitious in both breadth and depth. Added to this, the school's changes to the order of the knowledge that pupils should learn means that pupils can build logically on previous learning. In a small number of subjects, the school's work on the curriculum is at an earlier stage. Some teachers do not have the expertise and confidence required to deliver these new curriculums well. For example, they do not explain new concepts and ideas with sufficient clarity. This means that some pupils, including those with SEND, do not learn the curriculum as well as they could do.

The school is refining its approach to assessment. Most teachers check pupils' understanding often in lessons. This enables them to identify gaps and address misconceptions. However, in some subjects, there are occasions when assessment strategies are not used effectively enough. This hampers teachers' knowledge of whether pupils' earlier learning is secure. As a result, some pupils do not have the knowledge that they need to embark on new learning with confidence.

The school has appropriate systems in place to identify with accuracy the additional needs of pupils with SEND. The school works closely with a range of external agencies to meet pupils' needs. Added to this, the school engages well with parents and carers of those pupils with SEND in order to identify how best to support their learning.

Reading is a high priority for the school. There is a sharp focus on identifying and supporting those pupils who struggle to read. This means that these pupils quickly receive the help that they need from staff to become confident and fluent readers. Pupils are inspired to read a broad range of high-quality texts. They are encouraged by staff to use the school library, to join reading clubs and to become reading buddies for younger pupils.

Most pupils have the desire to succeed. Typically, little learning is lost due to disruptive behaviour in lessons. Even so, a small number of pupils use inappropriate language and they are unkind to others. The school does not always address these issues as effectively as it should. As a result, some pupils are reluctant to report concerns.

Students in the sixth form are polite and well mannered. Sixth-form students serve as positive role models to younger pupils by taking on various leadership positions.

Pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, receive a comprehensive careers programme. For example, in Years 10 and 12, pupils undertake a range of work experiences. The school ensures that pupils receive independent careers advice and guidance. This helps pupils to become fully informed about their next steps in their education, employment or training.

Pupils are encouraged to take part in a range of charitable initiatives. For example, pupils raise money for local hospices and foodbanks through sponsored runs. These activities contribute well to pupils' wider development beyond the curriculum. However, the personal, social and health education (PSHE) curriculum has not been developed fully by

the school. Opportunities to learn about life in modern Britain are limited. Some pupils do not have a secure understanding of fundamental British values.

In the process of addressing their school improvement priorities, leaders consult well with staff. For example, leaders consider the workload of staff when making decisions about the curriculum. As a result, staff feel that their well-being is considered by the school and that their workload is manageable.

In recent years, governors have been relentless in their pursuit of a better understanding of the school's context. As a result, governors have more knowledge and confidence to challenge and hold leaders to account for the quality of education for all pupils.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Some teachers do not have the skills and expertise to deliver the newly designed curriculum consistently well. This hinders how well pupils learn. The school should continue to support teachers to design learning well so that pupils learn the intended curriculum and achieve as well as they should.
- The school's strategies for assessing pupils' learning are still in development. As a result, in some subjects, some teachers do not identify where pupils have gaps in their knowledge. The school should ensure that teachers use assessment effectively so that they know exactly how well pupils are building up their knowledge over time.
- The school does not deal with inappropriate language, unkind behaviour and some incidents of bullying as well as it should. This means that the behaviour of some pupils negatively impacts on the experiences of their peers. Added to this, some pupils do not feel able to report concerns. The school should take action to address any negative behaviour and/or bullying swiftly and appropriately.
- The school has not ensured that the PSHE curriculum is designed well. As a result, some pupils do not have a meaningful understanding of fundamental British values and the importance of equality and diversity. The school should put into place an effective PSHE curriculum so that pupils build a secure understanding of the importance of tolerance and respect in modern society.

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 November 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' is used to mean pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND); pupils who meet the [definition of children in need of help and protection](#); pupils receiving statutory local authority support from a social worker; and pupils who otherwise meet the criteria used for deciding the school's [pupil premium funding](#) (this includes pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years, looked after children (children in local authority care) and/or children who left care through adoption or another formal route).

School details

Unique reference number	112385
Local authority	Westmorland and Furness
Inspection number	10294296
Type of school	Secondary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1349
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	329
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Isabel O'Donovan
Headteacher	Matthew Hardwick
Website	www.uvhs.uk
Date of previous inspection	26 September 2018, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school is part of the South Lakes Federation.
- The school makes use of five registered alternative providers and five unregistered alternative providers for a small number of pupils.
- The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 13 with information and engagement about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.

Information about this inspection

Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.

- This was the first routine inspection that the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation.
- Inspectors held meetings with the headteacher, senior leaders and subject leaders. Inspectors met with a range of other staff and leaders during the inspection.
- Inspectors spoke with members of the governing body, including the chair of governors. Inspectors also spoke with a representative of the local authority and the school improvement partner.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour during social times and during movement in school.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: mathematics, science, English, Spanish, geography. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with leaders and teachers, visited a sample of lessons, reviewed samples of pupils' work and spoke with some pupils.
- Inspectors also met with subject leaders to review other areas of the curriculum.
- Inspectors spoke with the leaders responsible for personal development, pupil premium, behaviour and attendance, alternative provision, early careers teachers, careers, SEND and reading.
- Inspectors reviewed a range of documents, including leaders' self-evaluation, attendance and behaviour records.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspectors: reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.
- Inspectors spoke to staff about their workload and well-being.
- Inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text responses. The inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted's online surveys for staff and pupils.

Inspection team

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