

Inspection of St Matthew's CofE School

Westnewton, Wigton, Cumbria CA7 3NT

Inspection dates: 28 and 29 November 2023

Overall effectiveness **Good**

The quality of education **Good**

Behaviour and attitudes **Good**

Personal development **Good**

Leadership and management **Good**

Early years provision **Good**

Previous inspection grade Good

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils enjoy attending this happy and caring school. They appreciate the positive relationships they have with each other and with staff. Pupils told inspectors that they feel confident to speak to trusted adults in school. They said that any worries they have are quickly resolved by staff.

Pupils were actively involved in developing the school's values and expectations for their behaviour. They live out these values through their words and actions each day. For instance, pupils build positive friendships, and they treat each other with kindness and respect. Pupils behave well during lessons and at breaktimes.

The school has high expectations of what all pupils should achieve. Since the previous inspection, the school has taken appropriate steps to strengthen the curriculum. It has ensured that there is clarity about what pupils should learn from the early years to the end of Year 6. Pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), achieve well across the curriculum.

Pupils carry out their roles and responsibilities with pride. They told inspectors about the achievements of the school's 'dream team'. For example, these pupils have introduced successful recycling initiatives, and they have contributed positively to the development of a local play area.

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

The school has a broad and ambitious curriculum in place for pupils, including for children in the early years. The curriculum sets out clearly, in well-ordered steps, the important knowledge that pupils should learn. In the main, this helps teachers to design and deliver learning with clarity and confidence. Teachers typically use assessment strategies effectively to check that pupils have learned and understood what has been taught.

The school has recently revised a small number of subject curriculums. However, teachers are not as confident or expert in delivering some aspects of these new curriculums as they are with other subjects. As a result, some pupils' knowledge is not as secure as it could be. This is also the case for some children in the early years. Over time, some pupils struggle to remember the key knowledge that they have been taught in these subjects.

Children begin learning phonics from the moment they start in the Reception class. The school ensures that staff have the knowledge and expertise to teach the phonics curriculum well. Pupils, including those with SEND, progress successfully through the phonics programme, confidently applying their knowledge when they write. Pupils read books that are closely matched to the sounds they have learned. This helps pupils to read with confidence and fluency. The school is diligent in checking pupils' phonics knowledge, and it provides targeted support to address any gaps in pupils' learning when needed.

The school prioritises reading. It provides a diverse range of books, which pupils read avidly. Pupils are given many opportunities to read and to hear adults read. This supports pupils to develop a love of reading and exposes them to an expansive vocabulary. Pupils said that they enjoy reading books at breaktimes in the cosy reading area.

The school ensures that the additional needs of pupils with SEND are identified accurately and fully met, including for children in the early years. The school considers the views of pupils, parents and carers when providing support for pupils with SEND. Typically, staff make effective adaptations to the delivery of the curriculum to make certain that pupils with SEND learn the curriculum successfully and achieve well.

The school has high expectations for pupils' rates of attendance. It takes effective action to improve the attendance of those pupils who do not attend school as regularly as they should. As such, pupils, including those with SEND, have high rates of attendance.

Pupils have positive attitudes to their learning. This starts in the early years, where children eagerly join in with activities and learn to focus for extended periods of time. Pupils of all ages spoke enthusiastically to inspectors about their learning. Pupils rise to the schools' high expectations for behaviour.

Pupils benefit from the school's focus on promoting their personal development. They enjoy taking part in sports competitions and attending clubs such as cricket, craft and computing. Pupils broaden their experiences through visiting places that contrast with the school's local community. Through hearing stories and listening to visitors at the school, pupils learn about the importance of diversity and of respecting the views of others. Pupils are well prepared for life in modern Britain.

Those responsible for governance know the school well. They receive suitable information about the impact of the school's work. As a result, they provide effective support and challenge.

The school ensures that it engages staff in decisions about school improvement. For example, the school considered staff's views and the impact on their workload when making recent changes to the curriculum.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In a small number of subjects, some aspects of the new curriculums are not being implemented as well as intended. This means that pupils, including children

in the early years, are not building their knowledge as securely as they should in these subjects. The school should ensure that pupils gain the depth of knowledge that they need in each subject to be sufficiently 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' 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	112308
Local authority	Cumberland
Inspection number	10255951
Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	52
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chairs of governing body	Patrice Sanderson Karen Windross
Headteacher	Helen Harrison
Website	www.stmatthews.cumbria.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	25 January 2022, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school does not use any alternative provision.
- The school is a Church of England school. The school's most recent section 48 inspection took place in January 2017. The next inspection will be scheduled to take place prior to January 2025.

Information about this inspection

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

- Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.
- Inspectors discussed any continued impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.

- Inspectors met with the headteacher, subject leaders, the chairs of the governing body, other governors and a range of staff at the school. Inspectors also met with representatives of the local authority and of the diocese.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics and geography. For each deep dive, inspectors held discussions about the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. Inspectors also discussed the curriculum in some other subjects.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, 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.
- The lead inspector listened to pupils from Years 1, 2 and 3 read to a known adult.
- Inspectors observed pupils at breaktime, lunchtime and when moving around the school.
- Inspectors spoke to leaders about pupils' personal, social, health and economic education.
- Inspectors spoke to parents on the playground and considered the responses to Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text comments. Inspectors also considered the responses to Ofsted's online surveys for staff and for pupils.
- Inspectors met with groups of pupils throughout the inspection to gather their views about school life.
- Inspectors reviewed a wide range of documents, including those related to the governance of the school.

Inspection team

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His Majesty's Inspector

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