

Inspection of a good school: Cockermouth School

Castlegate Drive, Cockermouth, Cumbria CA13 9HF

Inspection dates:

7 and 8 February 2024

The headteacher of this school is Richard King. The school is part of the Cockermouth School Academy Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is a single academy trust overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Alan Rankin.

Outcome

Cockermouth School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are polite and respectful. They value the positive relationships that they have with staff. Pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), make a significant contribution to the calm atmosphere that exists at the school. They extend a warm welcome to new arrivals. This helps pupils who are new to the school to settle in quickly. Pupils are happy.

Pupils respond positively to the high aspirations that the school has for their achievement. This includes pupils who benefit from the specially resourced provision for pupils with SEND (specially resourced provision). Most pupils achieve well.

Pupils enjoy an impressive range of activities that make a strong contribution to the development of their talents and interests. For example, they take part in musical productions as well as strategy gaming, art, music and sports clubs.

Pupils enjoy trips that enhance their understanding of the subjects that they study. These include cultural visits to the theatre, museums and sites of historical significance. This helps pupils to deepen their knowledge of famous artists and writers from the local area.

Pupils relish the opportunities that they have to take on leadership roles. For example, they act as sports leaders, peer mentors and school councillors. Pupils develop into confident and independent young people. Students in the sixth form act as excellent role models for their younger peers.

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

Trustees have established a culture at the school where everyone is valued and included. They understand the school's performance accurately. They use this information well to assure themselves about the quality of education that pupils receive. Trustees carry out their statutory duties very effectively.

The school has designed an ambitious suite of subject curriculums. It has thought deeply about the important knowledge that pupils should acquire. Most pupils are well prepared for each stage in their education. Pupils in Year 11 and students in Year 13 move on to meaningful destinations that include further education, apprenticeships or employment with training.

Staff use their strong subject knowledge to design activities that help most pupils to develop their knowledge and skills securely over time. At times, the information that the school holds about the needs of some pupils is not used effectively. As a result, these pupils do not receive the help that they need to achieve as well as they should.

Staff make regular checks on what pupils know and remember. Staff use this information well to address the gaps and misconceptions that pupils may have about their learning.

The school accurately identifies the additional needs of pupils with SEND. Staff provide these pupils with experiences that enable them to learn successfully alongside their peers. Pupils who benefit from the specially resourced provision flourish because of the expert help that they receive. They are extremely well prepared for adulthood.

The school accurately identifies all pupils' reading needs as soon as they start Year 7. Staff put in place highly nuanced support to quickly address any gaps that pupils may have in their phonics knowledge. Books are well matched to each pupil's stage in reading development. Staff give pupils all the help that they need to become confident and fluent readers. The school provides a comprehensive programme of literacy support for pupils. This helps them to learn successfully across the curriculum.

Pupils demonstrate positive attitudes towards their learning. They rarely interrupt lessons. Students in the sixth form are diligent and committed to their studies. The school provides effective support for pupils who may need to improve their levels of attendance. For example, the school has successfully addressed the barriers that have prevented some pupils from attending regularly. This has helped to reduce the number of pupils that are persistently absent from school.

The personal, health, social and economic education programme prepares pupils exceptionally well for life in modern Britain. Pupils know how to keep themselves physically and mentally healthy. They know the signs of a healthy relationship and how to stay safe online. Pupils also benefit from a well-designed programme of careers education. This helps them to make informed decisions about their futures. Strong links with local employers provide pupils with powerful experiences of the world of work.

The school ensures that staff have access to a wealth of high-quality training and support for their well-being. This helps them to carry out their roles with expertise. Staff are extremely proud to work at the school.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Some pupils do not receive the help with their learning that they need. As a result, these pupils do not learn curriculum content in sufficient depth. The school should ensure that staff receive the support that they need to meet the needs of pupils equally well.

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 third ungraded inspection since we judged the predecessor school, Cockermouth School, to be good in May 2012.

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	142306
Local authority	Cumberland
Inspection number	10290303
Type of school	Secondary Comprehensive
School category	Academy converter
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	1284
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	203
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Alan Rankin
Headteacher	Richard King
Website	www.ckermouthschool.org
Date of previous inspection	22 May 2018, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school is part of the Cockermouth School Academy Trust.
- The school has specially resourced provision for 32 pupils with SEND aged between seven and 16 years. The specially resourced provision supports pupils with autism. At the time of the inspection, there were 32 pupils on roll in this provision. Each of these pupils has an education, health and care plan.
- The school makes use of one registered alternative provider and two 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 inspection 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 leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- The inspectors carried out deep dives in the following subjects: mathematics, science, languages, history and art and design. For each deep dive, they held discussions about the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons, spoke with Staff, spoke with some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher and other senior leaders.
- The lead inspector held a meeting with members of the trust board including the chair of trustees. He also spoke to the school improvement partner.
- Inspectors met with leaders to discuss SEND, the curriculum, assessment, pupils' behaviour and attitudes and the provision for pupils' personal 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 evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, inspectors reviewed the single central record and took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils. They considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.
- 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
Chris Beard	Ofsted Inspector

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