

Inspection of a good school: St Michael's CofE Primary School

Bothel, Wigton, Cumbria CA7 2HN

Inspection date:

14 March 2024

Outcome

St Michael's CofE Primary School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are cheerful and happy at this school. They treat each other and adults with kindness and consideration. They are polite and well-mannered. They appreciate the positive friendships that they have with each other. Pupils know that there are adults in school who care for them and will help them if they are sad or worried. They value the strong relationships that they have with staff.

Pupils have an astute understanding of how people can be different and why it is important to be tolerant and respectful of everyone. They are empathetic and compassionate. Pupils value the opportunity to speak regularly with pupils at a school in India. They enjoy exchanging stories about their lives, culture and experiences. This helps pupils to develop a sense of the wider world and the differences and similarities between people.

The school has high expectations for pupils' achievement. Pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), have positive attitudes towards their learning. They pay particular attention to the school's values of perseverance and courage and are keen to try hard and persist. They behave well and focus on their learning in lessons. Pupils achieve well.

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

The school has designed a broad and rich curriculum. It has broken down the important knowledge for pupils to learn into smaller steps of learning. This helps pupils to build knowledge in a logical way from the beginning of the early years to the end of Year 6. The school identifies pupils with SEND early. Staff are adept at supporting pupils with additional needs to learn the same ambitious curriculum as their classmates. The school has also carefully considered how to adapt the curriculum to meet the needs of pupils in mixed-age classes.

Teachers have a secure knowledge of the subjects that they teach. Generally, they present information clearly and choose appropriate activities to help pupils to practise their learning. However, in a few subjects, the delivery of the curriculum is not helping pupils to acquire the depth of knowledge, skills and vocabulary that they should. As a result, some pupils are not as prepared for new learning as they should be.

In some subjects, the curriculums have been recently introduced. The school is still developing assessment strategies that teachers will use to check pupils' learning is secure. In these subjects, teachers are not sufficiently clear about what pupils know and can remember from previous learning before they move on to new learning.

The school has prioritised reading across all year groups. It also promotes a love of reading among pupils. For example, some pupils are school librarians. They are passionate about reading, take good care of the library area and gladly recommend books to other pupils. Many pupils read widely and often in and out of school. The school has established a systematic approach to the delivery of the phonics programme. Staff have the knowledge and expertise to teach it consistently well. Pupils apply the phonics knowledge that they have learned and become confident and fluent readers. Those pupils who require additional support with reading are helped to catch up.

Pupils behave well in lessons, around the school and at breaktimes. They follow well-established routines and listen carefully to staff. The school has prioritised attendance. It has a strong understanding of the causes of some pupils' absence. It takes effective action to help families and to secure improvements if pupils have low prior attendance.

The school ensures that pupils have many opportunities to develop their skills and knowledge beyond the academic curriculum. For example, some pupils are members of the school council. They are proactive in organising school and community events and raising money for charity. Pupils value the wide range of activities and trips that they can attend. For example, they enjoy sports clubs, tournaments and festivals. They also appreciate trips to museums and to other cities.

Parents and the community hold the school in high regard. Governors and school leaders ensure that the education that the school provides has a positive impact on pupils. Governors hold the school to account and provide effective support and challenge. Staff appreciate the steps that the school has taken to prioritise their workload during a period of curriculum development.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In some subjects, the curriculums are new. As a result, the school is still developing assessment systems to check what pupils know and can remember from previous

learning. In these subjects, pupils learning is not as secure as it should be before they move on to new learning. The school should ensure that staff are well equipped to check pupils' prior knowledge before moving on to new learning so that pupils can build knowledge securely over time.

- In a few subjects, the curriculums have been recently introduced. The delivery of the curriculum in these subjects is not helping some pupils to learn all that they should. As a result, some pupils do not develop the depth of knowledge that they need to be fully prepared for new learning. The school should ensure that teachers have the support that they need to deliver the curriculum consistently 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 second ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good in December 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	112332
Local authority	Cumberland
Inspection number	10321350
Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	47
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Neil Milligan
Headteacher	Polly Page
Website	www.bothel.school
Date of previous inspection	21 November 2018, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- This Church of England school is in the Diocese of Carlisle. The most recent section 48 inspection was in November 2019. The next section 48 inspection is likely to take place in the 2025/26 academic year.
- The school does not make use of any alternative provision for pupils.

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 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 of the school.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher and other school leaders. They also spoke with a range of staff.
- During the inspection, the lead inspector spoke with four governors, including the chair of the governing body. She also spoke with representatives of the local authority and the diocese.

- Inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text comments. They also considered the responses from the Ofsted survey for staff. There were no responses to Ofsted's pupil survey. However, inspectors spoke with pupils about their learning and experiences in school.
- 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.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour at breaktimes, during lessons and around school. They also spoke with pupils about their experiences at school.
- During the inspection, inspectors carried out deep dives in early reading, mathematics and history. They met with subject leaders and teachers and visited a sample of lessons. Inspectors spoke with pupils about their learning in these subjects. They also looked at examples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors observed some pupils from Years 1 to 3 read to a familiar adult.

Inspection team

Sally Timmons, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

David Lobodzinski

Ofsted Inspector

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