

# Inspection of a good school: Valley Primary School and Nursery

Whinlatter Road, Whitehaven, Cumbria CA28 8DA

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Inspection dates:

6 and 7 March 2024

## Outcome

Valley Primary School and Nursery continues to be a good school.

## What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are happy and cheerful at this school. They confidently greet visitors and are friendly and inquisitive. Staff have built warm and positive relationships with pupils. Pupils know that they are well cared for. They appreciate the support that staff give them if they are upset or worried.

Pupils welcome the opportunity to learn from each other. For example, they openly share their beliefs, cultures and values and celebrate difference and diversity. This helps to prepare pupils for life in modern Britain and helps them to develop respect and tolerance for others.

The school has high expectations for pupils' achievement. Pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), try their best in lessons. They think carefully about what they are learning. For example, they analyse and question information that they are given and use their prior knowledge to make sense of new learning. Most pupils achieve well.

Pupils value the many chances that they have to take part in activities, such as choir, gymnastics, crochet and craft clubs. They enjoy competing in sports competitions and tournaments. Pupils take great pride in the successes that they have in such events.

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

The school has constructed an ambitious curriculum from the beginning of the early years to the end of Year 6. It has identified the important knowledge that pupils should learn and the order in which they should learn it. The design of the curriculum also provides pupils with a range of opportunities to develop subject-specific skills. For example, pupils learn how to think and work like historians, scientists and geographers.

Pupils with SEND are identified early. They are supported well by staff who understand their individual needs. The school has prioritised attendance so that pupils do not miss

out on their education. Although some pupils do not attend as well as they should, the school has robust systems in place to monitor this and to understand why this might be. It takes effective action to help families and to improve some pupils' low prior attendance.

Teachers have a secure knowledge of the subjects that they teach. They choose appropriate activities and resources that enable pupils to practise and rehearse their learning. Teachers also model subject-specific vocabulary effectively. Pupils use these new words with confidence. Teachers regularly check that pupils are learning the intended curriculum. However, at times, teachers do not consistently address some pupils' errors and misunderstandings in their learning. As a result, some pupils do not learn all that they could.

The school focuses sharply on helping pupils who are in the early stages of learning to read. It has an established phonics programme that is taught by staff with the expertise that they need to teach it consistently well. This helps pupils to successfully acquire the phonics knowledge that they need to read with confidence and fluency. Those who fall behind in the phonics programme are supported effectively to learn all that they should. Pupils enjoy reading a wide range of diverse texts. They know why it is important to read widely and often and they do so with enthusiasm.

Pupils behave well. They are polite, well-mannered and considerate of others. At breaktimes, pupils make sure that everyone is included and they play cheerily together. Pupils are fully involved during lessons and focus well on their learning.

The school has developed a personalised programme of opportunities to support pupils' broader development. For example, it has used local health data and information to inform and shape the curriculum for personal, social and health education (PSHE). Pupils take up a variety of roles, such as school councillors and members of a school-based community group. These pupils organise events in school, fundraise for individuals and for charities and organise the school tuck shop. Some pupils also exchange letters with residents from a local care home and they spend time visiting them. These rich experiences help pupils to develop a sense of community and responsibility.

The school is committed to providing a high-quality education for pupils. Governors understand their roles and responsibilities. They provide effective support and challenge to the school. Staff value the opportunities that they have for professional development to further advance their knowledge and expertise. They also appreciate the steps that the school has taken to reduce their workload, helping them to concentrate on delivering the curriculum well. Parents appreciate the help that the school provides to support families and the wider school community.

## **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, teachers do not consistently identify and address errors and misconceptions in pupils' learning. This means that some pupils' learning is not as secure as it should be. The school should ensure that pupils have securely grasped curriculum content before moving them on to new learning.

## 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 March 2015.

## 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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	134214
<b>Local authority</b>	Cumberland
<b>Inspection number</b>	10321406
<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3 to 11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	276
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair of governing body</b>	Joanne Smith
<b>Headteacher</b>	Sarah Jardine
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.valleyprimary.cumbria.sch.uk">www.valleyprimary.cumbria.sch.uk</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	27 February 2019, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

## Information about this school

- 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. The inspector discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and has taken that into account in her evaluation of the school.
- The inspector met with the headteacher, deputy headteacher and other school leaders. She also spoke with a range of staff.
- During the inspection, the inspector spoke with six governors, including the chair of the governing body. She also spoke with a representative of the local authority.
- The inspector considered the responses to Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text comments. She also considered the responses from the Ofsted surveys for staff and for pupils.

- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspector 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 inspector observed pupils' behaviour at breaktimes, during lessons and around school. She also spoke with pupils about their experiences at school.
- During the inspection, the inspector carried out deep dives in early reading, mathematics and history. She met with subject leaders and teachers and visited a sample of lessons. The inspector spoke with pupils about their learning in these subjects. She looked at examples of pupils' work. The inspector also considered the curriculum in some other subjects.
- The inspector observed some pupils from Years 1 to 3 read to a familiar adult.

### **Inspection team**

Sally Timmons, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

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