Inspection of a good school: Kirkbie Kendal School

Lound Road, Kendal, Cumbria LA9 7EQ

Inspection dates: 8 and 9 May 2024

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?

Pupils, including students in the sixth form, are proud to attend this school. Pupils value the friendships that they forge. They also appreciate the care and warmth that they receive from teachers. This helps pupils to feel safe and happy.

Pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), typically behave well during lessons and at social times. Lessons are rarely interrupted by the behaviour of others. This creates a purposeful learning environment in classrooms. Students in the sixth form have positive attitudes towards their learning. They are motivated and keen to do well.

The school has high expectations of pupils' achievement. Nonetheless, some of the flaws with the curriculum design means that pupils do not learn all that they should. In addition, gaps in pupils' knowledge are not checked and remedied effectively. As a result, pupils' learning is uneven and this limits how well they achieve.

Most pupils, including those with SEND, enjoy the wider opportunities that the school offers. For instance, sixth-form students enjoy designing and delivering reading support sessions for younger pupils. They value holding such positions of responsibility as this builds their confidence. Some pupils relish working with others across the school for their annual theatre performance. Many pupils also enjoy taking part in The Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme. This helps them to build resilience and team working skills.

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

The school has an accurate understanding of the strengths and weaknesses in the quality of education on offer to pupils. In recent times, with the support of the governing body, they have taken positive steps to improve the curriculum across key stages 3 and 4 and in

the sixth form. For instance, the school has improved the modern foreign languages options offered to pupils in key stage 3. This is because the school is working to provide a more ambitious curriculum for pupils across school. Most staff value how the school has managed their workload through this process of change. Nevertheless, some of the work to improve the curriculum is at varying stages of development. In many subjects, the knowledge that pupils should be taught and when this content should be delivered is not clear. Consequently, pupils, including those with SEND, do not learn all that they should to help them to know and to remember more over time.

In subjects where the curriculum is more developed, teachers use their expertise to design effective learning activities for pupils. However, in other subjects, some teachers do not use assessment strategies well enough to identify and address gaps in pupils' learning. This hampers how well pupils, including those in the sixth form, build on their knowledge over time.

The school has improved how pupils' additional needs are identified and assessed. Staff appreciate the new information and guidance that they receive about how to adapt their teaching activities for pupils with SEND. However, the weaknesses in the curriculum design means that some pupils with SEND do not achieve as well as they should.

The school has renewed its approach to identifying and to supporting pupils who struggle to read. Pupils in Years 7 to 10, who find reading difficult, are beginning to benefit from these improvements. However, the support for older pupils who struggle to read is not developed well enough. This restricts how well they access the curriculum. The school has recently introduced a range of initiatives to further promote a love of reading across the school.

Through consultation with staff, the school has reshaped its behaviour management policy and practices. This has helped most staff to better support pupils who struggle to regulate their own behaviour. In the main, pupils are respectful and follow staff's instructions carefully.

Many pupils are persistently absent from school. This means that they miss out on valuable learning. At times, the school does not have sufficient understanding of the patterns and reasons for absence. The school also does not monitor the attendance in sixth form as well as it should. This limits how well the school removes the barriers that cause pupils to miss school.

Through the schools' personal, social, health, economic education curriculum, pupils learn about age-appropriate ways to keep safe. For instance, students in the sixth form learn about driving safely. Pupils receive useful information and guidance about careers and further educational opportunities that are available to them. As such, they are prepared well for their next steps. Even so, some pupils have insufficient opportunities to deepen their understanding of the importance of fundamental British values and of different faiths. A small number of pupils also use derogatory language as they do not understand the negative impact that this can have on others. In this regard, some pupils are not as prepared well for life in modern Britain.

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 school has not clearly identified the key knowledge that pupils should learn. As such, it is not clear what subject content should be taught and how this knowledge should build on prior learning. This means that some pupils do not learn all that they should. The school should refine the curriculum in these subjects to ensure that teachers know what pupils should learn and how to build their knowledge securely over time.

- The support for older pupils who struggle to read is underdeveloped. As such, these pupils do not overcome gaps in their reading knowledge as well as they should. The school should improve its practices in supporting pupils in Year 11 and the sixth form to read so that they can better access the curriculum.

- Some teachers do not use strategies to assess what pupils know effectively. As a result, pupils have unaddressed gaps in their knowledge. The school should ensure that teachers check that pupils have secured the learning that they need to make sense of new subject content.

- The school's monitoring of attendance in the sixth form is not as rigorous as in the rest of the school. Barriers to sixth-form learning are not identified and addressed effectively. Leaders should improve how patterns and causes of pupils' absence in the sixth form are monitored so that barriers that are causing pupils to miss school are understood and removed successfully.

- Pupils have limited opportunities to learn about fundamental British values and different faiths in sufficient depth. At times, this means that some pupils have a superficial understanding of different religions and cultures. A small number of pupils have not grasped fully the negative impact that the use of derogatory language can have on others. The school should ensure that the programme to promote pupils' wider development is carefully designed to better prepare pupils for life in modern Britain.

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 September 2014

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	136671
Local authority	Westmorland and Furness
Inspection number	10321421
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	1082
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	178
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Sally Ann Parnaby
Headteacher	Mark Harris
Website	www.kirkbiekendal.cumbria.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	18 December 2018, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school is part of the Kirkbie Kendal School single-academy trust.
- The school is part of the South Lakes Federation.
- The current headteacher and two deputy headteachers were appointed in September 2021.
- The governing body operates a breakfast club provision.
- The school makes use of one registered alternative provider for a very 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 of the school.
- Inspectors held meetings with the headteacher and other school leaders. Inspectors also met with a range of other staff.
- Inspectors spoke with members of the governing body, including the chair of governors. They also spoke with representatives of the local authority.
- The inspectors observed pupils' behaviour across the school, including at social times. Inspectors also spoke to groups of pupils from Years 7 to 13 about their experience of school.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: mathematics, English and modern foreign languages. 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 about their learning.
- Inspectors met with leaders to review other areas of the curriculum.
- Inspectors spoke with the leaders responsible for pupils' wider development, behaviour and attendance, alternative provision, sixth form, the provision for SEND and reading.
- Inspectors reviewed a range of documents, including the school's self-evaluation and records relating to pupils' attendance and behaviour.
- 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.
- The inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text comments. They also considered the responses to Ofsted's online surveys for staff and for pupils.

Inspection team

Amina Modan, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Jackie Cahalin	Ofsted Inspector

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for children looked after, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at http://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: http://eepurl.com/iTrDn.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.gov.uk/ofsted

© Crown copyright 2024