

Inspection of Black Combe Junior School

Moor Road, Millom, Cumbria LA18 5DT

Inspection dates: 2 and 3 July 2024

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

The quality of education

Requires improvement

Behaviour and attitudes

Good

Personal development

Good

Leadership and management

Requires improvement

Previous inspection grade

Good

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils enjoy coming to this school. Staff greet them warmly each morning. Pupils are keen to share their school values and show respect to one another. They listen carefully to each other and make sure everyone gets to have their turn.

The school has high expectations for pupils' achievement. Pupils strive to live up to these aspirations. They try their best during lessons. Pupils behave equally well during social times. They enjoy receiving certificates in assemblies to celebrate their hard work and kind behaviour.

The school has recently overhauled the curriculum. However, the design and delivery of the curriculum is variable across subjects and classes. In addition, pupils who require help with their reading do not receive the support that they need to become confident readers. These pupils are not as well prepared for the next stage of their education as they should be.

The school provides a variety of trips to help bring pupils' learning to life. These include residential trips to outdoor activity centres which help pupils to develop their teamwork skills. Pupils enjoy the clubs that they attend. These clubs range from choir to tag rugby.

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

The curriculum has been reviewed. It is ambitious and meets the needs of learners, including those pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). In most subjects, the school has made clear what it wants pupils to know. However, in some subjects the school has not identified the knowledge that pupils will learn clearly enough. This makes it difficult for teachers to know what should be taught. As a result, some pupils do not progress as well as they should in these curriculum subjects.

During lessons, teachers carefully check pupils' understanding. They ensure that misconceptions are addressed quickly. The school has introduced a range of assessment strategies which are generally used appropriately to find out how well pupils are remembering the curriculum in the longer-term. However, teachers are at different stages of delivering the refreshed curriculums consistently well. This hinders pupils from learning all that they should. It leads to their variable achievement across different subjects. The school has not checked the delivery of the curriculum sufficiently well. This prevents them from supporting teachers to improve their practice.

The school understands how important it is for pupils to read with fluency for their future success. Pupils are encouraged to read a range of interesting texts. However, the school has not ensured that pupils at the early stages of learning to read receive the help and support that they need. Furthermore, the school does not identify and address the specific gaps in these pupils' reading knowledge. This hinders how

quickly these pupils learn to read and how well they access learning across the curriculum.

The school identifies the needs of pupils with SEND accurately. Staff make sure that pupils with SEND receive the help that they need to access the curriculum. The school provides effective support for pupils and their families so that pupils with SEND all fully involved in school life. Even so, the achievement of pupils with SEND is variable due to the inconsistencies in the curriculum design and delivery.

Pupils behave well. They like the way that they are encouraged to rectify their actions if they say or do something wrong. Pupils benefit from working with others from different year groups. For example, older pupils enjoy supporting younger pupils in reading or mathematics activities as buddies.

Pupils have a well-developed understanding of how to keep themselves safe, including when they are online. The school encourages pupils to think about others through their charitable work. For example, the school supports a number of local and national charities. The school ensures that pupils' talents are nurtured well. For instance, through brass club, the school play and a range of sporting events. Pupils are encouraged to develop their understanding of life in modern Britain, including through their residential trip to London.

Governors work closely with the school so that they offer sufficient challenge and support. Staff feel appreciated and enjoy working at the school. They appreciate the support that the school provides to help them to manage their workload.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The school does not make sure that pupils at the early stages of learning to read receive appropriate support to improve their reading knowledge. As a result, some pupils do not have the phonics knowledge that they need to read with confidence and fluency. The school should ensure that pupils receive the support that they need to overcome gaps in their knowledge and catch up quickly with their peers.
- In some subjects, the delivery of the curriculum is variable. The school has not checked how well staff are teaching subject content. This hampers the learning of some pupils, including those with SEND. It also means that teachers do not receive the help and development that they need to build their expertise. The school should develop a stronger oversight of how well the curriculum is taught so that staff receive the support that they need to deliver the curriculum consistently well.

- In some subjects, the school has not identified the knowledge that pupils should learn clearly enough. This hinders teachers in designing learning that supports pupils to build on their knowledge over time. In these subjects, leaders should ensure that staff are clear about what pupils should learn and when it should be taught.

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	112160
Local authority	Cumberland
Inspection number	10321332
Type of school	Junior
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	7 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	112
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Darren Foote
Headteacher	Catherine Dennison
Website	www.blackcombe.cumbria.sch.uk
Dates of previous inspection	15 and 16 January 2019, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school does not use any alternative provision for pupils.

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.
- 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, senior leaders and other members of staff.
- Inspectors met with members of the governing body and a representative of the local authority.

- Inspectors carried out deep dives in the following subjects: English, including 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 considered the curriculum in other subject areas.
- Inspectors observed pupils read to a trusted adult.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour during playtimes and while in lessons.
- 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 considered the responses to Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text comments. They considered the responses to Ofsted's online staff and pupil surveys. Inspectors met with parents and carers to gather their views and opinions about the school.

Inspection team

Sarah Barraclough, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Garry White

Ofsted Inspector

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