

Inspection of Blackford CofE Primary School

Blackford, Carlisle, Cumbria CA6 4ES

Inspection dates:	8 and 9 October 2024
The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Early years provision	Good
Previous inspection grade	Good

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils flourish in this happy, nurturing school. Those who are new to the school settle in quickly and develop positive friendships. Pupils are confident that staff will listen and support them if they have any worries. Children in the early years radiate confidence as they run to share their achievements with staff. Pupils of all ages develop strong bonds with the adults in the school.

The school has high expectations for pupils' achievement, including for those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Pupils have positive attitudes to learning and are aspirational for the future. They achieve well across a wide range of subjects.

Pupils understand the school's high expectations of their behaviour and are eager to live up to these. They listen attentively in lessons and move around the school calmly. At social times, pupils play cooperatively and demonstrate respect towards each other. Staff support pupils well to develop their understanding of how their behaviour can impact on the feelings of others.

Pupils enjoy engaging in the experiences that the school provides beyond the academic curriculum. They delight in using the new play equipment outside and speak positively about accessing activities, such as football and baking, after school.

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

The school has a rich and ambitious curriculum in place for pupils, including those with SEND and children in the early years. The school has carefully considered the sequence of learning in mixed-age classes to ensure that there is clarity about the knowledge that pupils should learn and the order that pupils should learn this.

In a small number of subjects, the school has recently adopted new curriculums, which focus on deepening pupils' knowledge and expanding their vocabulary. The delivery of these subject curriculums is still being embedded. At times, the activities that pupils complete in these subjects do not always help them to understand the key knowledge that the school intends. As a result, some pupils' knowledge is not as secure as it could be.

The school uses assessment strategies effectively. For example, staff ask questions within lessons to check how well pupils are learning. These assessment practices enable the school to identify gaps in pupils' learning and to address this in subsequent lessons. This supports pupils to progress well through the curriculum.

The school aspires for all pupils to develop a love of reading. Staff read to pupils often. They ensure that pupils access a diverse range of texts and become familiar with many different authors. Children in the early years get to know familiar stories well and enjoy engaging in role play linked to these. Reading is at the heart of this school.

The school's phonics programme helps children to learn sounds and letters well from the start of their Reception year. Staff deliver the phonics programme clearly and consistently. They are quick to identify and support pupils who are finding reading difficult. Pupils have many opportunities to develop their confidence and fluency by reading books that are matched to the sounds that they know. Pupils achieve well in reading.

The additional needs of pupils with SEND are identified quickly and accurately. The school engages well with other professionals and with parents to enable staff to fully understand the different needs of pupils. The school makes effective adaptations to the delivery of the curriculum to ensure that pupils with SEND can access it alongside their peers.

Pupils are confident and enthusiastic learners. They enjoy their lessons and work hard. Children in the early years work collaboratively to problem solve as they build rockets and excitedly launch them outside. The school ensures that parents understand the importance of attending school. It identifies any concerns about pupils' attendance and takes swift action to address this. This has a positive impact over time.

The school enables pupils to broaden their experiences through trips to cities and theatres. Pupils enthusiastically recall seeing the Houses of Parliament during their visit to London. Pupils with SEND are supported to develop their talents and interests through taking part in activities, such as horse riding. Pupils have a secure understanding of fundamental British values. They explain how they experience democracy first hand by voting for school council members. Pupils' personal development is promoted well.

Governors know the school well and carry out their roles effectively. They provide support and challenge to leaders. The school fully considered the well-being and workload of staff when making recent changes to the curriculum. Training opportunities have strengthened teachers' skills and knowledge further, and staff morale is high.

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 has recently introduced new curriculums in some subjects, and changes are not fully embedded. This means that some pupils do not gain the depth of knowledge that they need in all subjects. The school should ensure that the new curriculums are firmly embedded so that pupils develop a secure body of knowledge and are sufficiently well prepared for the next stage of their education.

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	112300
Local authority	Cumberland
Inspection number	10294289
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	53
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Dorothea Mackay
Headteacher	Lindsey Slater
Website	www.blackford-school.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	23 May 2018, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The headteacher was appointed in September 2023.
- The school is a voluntary-aided Church of England primary school and is part of the Diocese of Carlisle. It was last inspected under section 48 of the Education Act 2005 in January 2023. The school's next section 48 inspection will be within five school years.
- The school does not use any alternative provision.
- The school operates before- and after-school clubs.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005. During a graded inspection, we grade the school for each of our key judgements (quality of education; behaviour and attitudes; personal development; and leadership and management) and for any relevant provision judgement (early years and/or sixth form provision). Schools receiving a graded inspection from September 2024, will not be given an overall effectiveness grade.

- Inspections are a point-in-time evaluation 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, other leaders, governors, and a range of staff at the school. The lead inspector spoke with representatives from the local authority and the Diocese.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics and history. 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 discussed the curriculum in some other subjects.
- 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.
- The lead inspector listened to pupils read to a known adult.
- Inspectors observed pupils at breaktime, lunchtime and when moving around the school.
- Inspectors spoke to parents and carers and considered the responses to Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text comments. Inspectors spoke to pupils and to staff to gather their views. There were no responses to Ofsted's online surveys for staff and for pupils.
- Inspectors reviewed a range of documents, including those related to the governance of the school.

Inspection team

Liz Dayton, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Cleo Cunningham

Ofsted Inspector

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